DRAMAS OF FRENCH CRIME

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RENE CASSELLARI

Frontispiece]

DRAMAS OF FRENCH CRIME

Being the Exploits of the Celebrated Detective

RENÉ CASSELLARI

With 27 Illustrations

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INTRODUCTION

ALLOW me to introduce a real live detective, my friend, M. René Cassellari, for twenty years a Commissary of the Sûreté Générale, Paris.

We have had such a deluge of impossible detectives lately that I am sure the British public will more than welcome these exploits of a man like René Cassellari, whose reputation for solving crimes that would baffle the ordinary detective has made him famous throughout Europe and America.

These French detectives have a way all their own. They sense the drama that underlies their work, and they frequently stage the finale in a manner that would bring them vast credit if they were to devote their talents to the theatre. Perhaps it is the Latin temperament, which in Cassellari's case is very pronounced, for his father was Italian and his mother English.

The successful detective officers of the Sûreté are invariably men of first-class education and, more often than not, excellent linguists. But then they are not recruited as are the officers of the Criminal Investigation Department of Scotland Yard. In France, a detective is not compelled to patrol the streets as a uniformed man before he is eligible for the investigation of crime. He enters the Sûreté as a clerk, engaging himself principally in keeping records and gaining a technical knowledge of criminals and their ways before he is entrusted with cases of his own. If he displays aptitude—and also success—he rises in his profession; if not, he reverts to his original work.

There is another highly interesting feature of the duties of a man like René Cassellari. The Sûreté Générale, of course, exercises jurisdiction all over France, in every class of crime. It is not confined to Paris itself. In England, except in cases of murder, and even then only when expert assistance is specially asked for, Scotland Yard has to confine its attentions to the Metropolitan Police area. I have always thought such a state of affairs a grave blot on our police system, for obviously the highly-trained officers of Scotland Yard have the greater experience—and also infinitely more facilities at their disposal—for dealing with serious crime. However, there it is. One day, I expect, we shall adopt the methods of our friends in France.

Cassellari's career has been an adventurous one, as well as highly diversified. Spies, forgers, burglars, murderers, blackmailers, and traitors have all passed through his hands, and I have selected those stories which I think are likely to interest the British public. They are all true, and they give, to my mind, a vastly interesting insight into the mentality of the French criminal, whose originality is so often something to marvel at.

Cassellari himself is no longer at the Sûreté. When the War came in 1914 he was appointed to an important post as liaison officer between the French and British Intelligence Departments on the Western Front. Now he is established in a flourishing private detective business of his own, with ramifications extending all over the world.

S. THEODORE FELSTEAD.

London,
January, 1930.

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THE DEGRADATION OF A TRAITOR

DRAMAS OF FRENCH CRIME

THE DEGRADATION OF A TRAITOR

TO be a successful police officer, you are compelled to steel yourself against many emotions, especially that of pity. What detective has not had through his hands some unfortunate creature for whose plight he can feel nothing but sorrow?

Particularly is this so in the case of an individual whose downfall has been brought about not so much by actual criminal instinct, but by that species of folly which makes a man desperately in love commit deeds that are close akin to madness.

My duties as a Commissary of the Sûreté Générale brought me into contact with thousands of men and women for whom one could feel but the slightest passing sorrow. Most of them, true, were criminals born and bred who had long since forsworn the path of rectitude. Occasionally, however, I had to deal with a case which aroused in me the most poignant sympathy.

If I live to be a hundred years old I shall never be able to forget the terrible case of Lieutenant Jules Ullmo. I still retain in my mind the panorama of that awe-inspiring official ceremony when the drug-shaken traitor was brought into a hollow square in the naval barracks of Toulon, there to undergo the dreadful humiliation of having his epaulets cut from his shoulders and his sword broken across the knee of his Commanding Officer.

For me, if not for the unfortunate Ullmo, it was the crowning episode in what was probably the most

exciting case that came my way throughout the whole of my official career. For Ullmo, alas, there remained nothing in store but the awful prospect of transportation to Devil's Island, where for twenty years, if he lived through the pestilential horrors of the Ile du Diable, he could console himself with the hope that the time might come when he would be freed to live in the convict colony of Cayenne, an outcast for evermore.

One day there arrived at the Department of the Navy a letter that aroused a turmoil of excitement. It was certainly not an everyday communication, for it made the outrageous proposition that the Government of the Republic should buy from the writer nothing less than the secret signalling code of the Navy! Consternation succeeded preliminary indignation. The authorities were naturally of the opinion that the code was the property of France and not to be disposed of by anyone. But the writer of this blackmailing letter plainly stated that unless the French Government bought the code from him he had another buyer ready and waiting in the shape of the German Secret Service.

Relations between France and Germany were not much easier then—I am referring to twenty years ago—than they are now. At any rate, we have since gone through the War that was getting so perilously close in 1909, so I will not be deemed guilty of exaggeration when I say that the receipt of a communication threatening to sell to France's worst potential enemy a secret that was then worth more than mere money could buy, created a state of affairs little short of a panic.

Every man of the world knows, of course, that

ULLMO, THE CONDEMNED TRAITOR

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there is always a certain amount of traffic in naval and military secrets. It is the aim of the agents of the Intelligence Departments of all the great European nations to obtain possession of other countries' secrets. The rewards are great for those who succeed in obtaining them; one may say with undeniable truth that the homage of a nation is not too much for the man who, by fair means or foul, becomes possessed of a rival nation's plans. Equally, also, this dangerous game of selling secrets carries with it the direst punishment, short of actual death, that can befall any man. There is no mercy for the traitor.

The scandals attendant on the *affaire* Dreyfus had long since died down. But this latest letter, demanding as it did point-blank the sum of 500,000 francs for the Navy's signalling code, aroused the authorities to instant action. It might—and again it might not—be another Dreyfus case. Whatever the consequences, the culprit was to be traced and brought to book.

He was quite explicit in his instructions. He demanded in the personal column of *Le Journal* an intimation that we were willing to bargain with him, after which the negotiations could proceed, provided he was satisfied of our good faith.

Such a letter, of course, could only be dealt with in one way. The Prefect of Police was telephoned to immediately, with the result that I was called in and instructed to proceed to the Department of the Navy.

I found a very harassed Secretary walking up and down his room awaiting my arrival. Impatiently waving me to a chair, he burst out:

"This is a very bad business, Cassellari. What is to be done?"

He handed me the letter and I read through it carefully, noted that it was written on common paper, and that the writing was characteristically French. I glanced at the postmark on the envelope; that, again, indicated little or nothing. The letter had been posted at the General Post Office in Paris, so nothing was to be gained in that direction.

"It is quite impossible for the code to be changed," the Secretary informed me. "If war should come unexpectedly—and such a thing is not improbable if such a code should pass into the possession of Germany—it would not only be almost impracticable, but highly dangerous to the Navy's efficiency, to change the code at a moment's notice. Secret signalling instructions are not learnt in a day. There are special classes in them, attended only by picked officers."

I could well realize the ticklishness of the position. The obtaining of the code might easily be the event that Germany was waiting for to declare war on France. The code could not be changed abruptly and without preparation; it would take considerable time and trouble to work out an alternative one. At the same time, no Government in its sane senses could seriously entertain the idea of buying its own secrets and letting the matter go at that. Such a course would have constituted nothing more than an invitation to further demands of an even more dangerous nature.

There remained, alternatively, the undeniable fact that the Germans could not possibly be permitted to obtain possession of the code. What, as M. le Secretary said, was to be done?

For the time being, I could see only one way out of the difficulty. Temporize with the thief, trap him, and then mete out to him the punishment that all traitors deserve.

There began in *Le Journal*, then, in what the English call the "Agony Column"—a favourite medium of communication between spies and traitors of all countries—a series of messages indicating that the negotiations were afoot. In answer to the original letter, I inserted a reply something to this effect :

> "X.Y.Z. Willing to buy provided price not too high. Address answer immediately B99 Le Journal."

Anxiously we awaited the reply, which was printed three days later.

> "B99. No business until satisfied bona fides. X.Y.Z."

Things went on in this fashion for a week or two, with the senior officials of the Navy Department growing more and more anxious. Desperate efforts were being made meanwhile to ascertain whether any of the signalling codes already issued were missing. But that, alas, was an almost impossible proposition, for the good and sufficient reason that there were many ships in foreign waters with which we could not get into touch.

In my own mind, I felt satisfied that the traitor would not attempt to deal with the German Secret Service until he had completely exhausted us. I also felt certain that he was a Frenchman, torn between

some lingering remnant of loyalty to his country and the desire to make money. It was imperative, above all things, to keep him nibbling at the bait.

Finally, when it had become too dangerous to dally any longer, we agreed to his instructions that the 500,000 francs should be placed in one of the wash-rooms of the Paris-Avignon express on a certain day. The arrangement was a perfectly simple one. The traitor should enter the apartment for the ostensible purpose of washing himself, there to make the pleasant surprise that someone had left half a million francs behind.

We, for our part, were to follow close behind and there, lo and behold, what were we to discover left on the wash-basin but the Navy's long-lost secret signalling code. Could anything have been more beautifully simple ?

One may be sure that when the *rapide* pulled out from Paris that day en route to the City of the Popes every passenger on board underwent prolonged scrutiny. But we could fix on no one with the guilty look of a traitor and so, perforce, we had nothing to do but place the money in the wash-room and await developments.

A humorous situation if you like ! Here we were, three of us from the Sûreté, watching like cats a part of a railway train in which there reposed the useful little fortune—in those days—of 500,000 francs, all in nice new bank notes, the numbers of which would have got any unlawful owner a life-long sentence in Cayenne. Be certain of the mighty good care we took that no unwanted person desired to wash himself immediately after the money had been deposited.

The traitor had been quite explicit in the instructions

he gave. The money was to be placed in the wash-room just before the train reached Avignon, with the laudable intention, no doubt, that he should make his escape the moment the train pulled up—or even before.

Hist! Someone was walking into the wash-room, a person most unconcerned in his manner. We gave him no chance to elude us. Like a flash, we followed him in, grabbed him by the scruff of the neck, picked up our money, and had him out on the platform all in the space of ten seconds. He protested mightily, but without giving him breath to answer we told him we were police officers and that we intended to question him on a very important matter.

"What is the meaning of this outrage?" he demanded angrily when we got him into the waiting room and locked the door. "Cannot I wash myself without being pounced upon by policemen?"

"It is all right," I informed him, a little breathless myself. "We have been waiting for you quite a long time."

"For me?" echoed the captive.

He was a stout, prosperous-looking fellow, middle-aged and, I must confess, not in the least the type I would have imagined to be selling naval secrets.

"You will be searched," I informed him. "If you are not the man we want you will receive an apology; if you are, no apology will be needed."

Mon Dieu! I nearly dropped dead when we ransacked his clothing from top to bottom and found, not the missing code, but a *carte d'identitie* and papers which seemed to suggest that our prisoner was the French Consul of Odessa! It was mortifying, indeed, but I had no intention of letting him go just then.

Instead, I explained the situation and told the Consul that I should have to detain him in custody until I had verified his bona-fides.

He had, it seems, been enjoying a holiday in his native land, but beyond gambling at Monte Carlo and losing more than was good for him, he had done nothing to justify suspicion of traitorous work. We were a long time in the waiting room ; ultimately the door was unlocked and we drifted out on to the station platform to continue our discussion, which was then becoming a trifle acrimonious. I, for my part, lost my temper and told the Consul that it seemed impossible to believe he could be as innocent as he pretended. Not to be outdone, the Consul retorted that I was a damned fool of a policeman and had no business to be in the Sûreté.

Now, here comes the most incredible part of this amazing story, all of it going to prove what I have invariably contended ; that is, without luck no detective ever achieved a successful career.

We were standing on the platform, the Consul and I and one of my men, still calling each other names. The place was practically deserted except for a dapper-dressed little fellow standing some yards away, evidently listening with the greatest interest to our fierce argument. His curiosity, in fact, strongly savoured of gross impertinence. To my intense surprise, he came over and spoke to me.

"I was just wondering," he remarked insolently, "why you are arresting that man."

I looked him up and down, feeling more unamiable than ever.

"What business is it of yours ?" I replied.

The little man smiled.

"Oh, none at all," he explained deprecatingly. "But I was a passenger on the train and had a talk with him as we left Paris. It appears very strange that he should be arrested."

"Then you had better keep your thoughts to yourself," I cried, more exasperated than ever. "Be off about your own affairs or you'll be sorry."

I was feeling more than a trifle sorry for myself. To think that all my carefully-laid schemes had gone astray! However, the inquisitive one said nothing more and walked off, but I didn't feel altogether satisfied. I called my assistant over.

"Here," I said. "Follow that man and find out something about him. He is much too curious for my liking."

My man went off and the Consul and I resumed our recriminations. We were still at them when my subordinate returned. He had detained the little man, told him that he was a police officer, and ordered him to produce his papers.

"He is nothing to worry about," said my coadjutor, without going into details. I was still so busy with the Consul that I refrained from bothering any more about the matter.

Well, we had drawn blank and I am afraid the three of us from the Sûreté made the long journey back to Paris angrier than ever. And I might just as well cheerfully confess that our reception at police headquarters was not exactly the appreciative one we had hoped for; rather should I say that it was frosty in the extreme.

"Ah," remarked the Secretary of the Navy, "so you have failed, as I expected. The traitor was too cunning for you, eh?"

What could I say? Truthfulness being a virtue of which I am exceedingly fond, I could not but admit, if only to myself, that we had been rather too precipitate in imagining that any traitor would be simple enough to fall into the first trap that was laid for him. Obviously, he meant to ascertain whether there was any double-dealing afoot.

Would the code now find its way to Berlin? The Secretary seemed to think it would, but I doubted it.

I was not mistaken. Shortly afterwards, the traitor wrote to the Navy again, and one must admit that he was sufficiently tactful not to refer to what had already happened. Instead, he requested that the authorities should send a representative to Toulon on a certain date and to be indoors at noon in a certain room when he, the writer, would telephone and make an appointment to hand over the code in exchange for the money at 3 p.m. that day.

Once more we got busy. I made my way to Toulon, this time with two different officers. At 11.50 a.m. that morning all telephonic communication in Toulon had been stopped. Any person who spoke after that time could be traced beyond all doubt.

It must have been just a minute or two on 12 o'clock when the thrill came. Someone—a man—speaking from the Brasserie de Strasbourg, called for the number of the Grand Hotel and asked to speak to the occupant of Room 38.

An exciting moment or two! The caller was kept waiting for a reply while like a flash two of us jumped into a motor-car and were driven like fury to the Brasserie. But as quick as we were, the fox had gone to earth. There had been someone speaking on the

telephone, the waiter informed us, but he had received his reply and had gone off.

We were baulked for the time being, but the officer who came hurrying along from the Grand Hotel brought news that once more aroused our hopes. The mysterious traitor had fixed an appointment for 3 p.m. at Ollioules, close to Toulon. The rendezvous should be a certain stone on which was marked the distance to the city.

A tantalizing customer, without a doubt. His latest proposal was that a single emissary of the Government should carry the money with him and wait on the lonely road while he, the possessor of the code, would come along in a motor-car and hand over the code in exchange for the money. A clever plan, undoubtedly. The stretch of road designated by him was so straight and unfrequented that he could watch for an ambush without the slightest trouble.

Our predicament was the risk attendant on stopping any automobile that came along. If we pulled up the wrong one the traitor would know beyond all doubt that the police were on his track. Also, short of stationing local officers around all the exits of Toulon, it was impossible to stop cars from using the road.

I meant to make no more mistakes this time, but it baffled my wits to devise a plan to meet the situation without fear of failure. I gave it up and decided that I would chance to luck. A naval officer from Toulon whom we pressed into our service was instructed to station himself at the meeting-place with the money in his possession, while I and my officers hid ourselves close by. I meant to take a chance; I thought it would be strange if the transaction did not take long enough to enable us to capture the criminal. If the

worst came to the worst, I meant to shoot him dead.

That was a breathless, memorable afternoon we spent on the Toulon road awaiting the denouément. Sulzbach, the decoy bird, walked up and down with a huge wad of banknotes in his possession. We heard an automobile in the distance and prepared for action. But it flashed by and disappeared up the road.

Another came whizzing along—and still another. Heavens above, all the automobiles in Toulon seemed to be passing our way that afternoon! What had happened to our man?

We were concealed some little distance on the Toulon side of the rendezvous. Suddenly, just as I was beginning to despair of anything turning up, a car came slowly by.

Who did it contain? I know you will say that my friend the French Consul of Odessa was the occupant, but you will be wrong. The driver was the inquisitive little gentleman whom I had ordered to be off about his business!

I won't go so far as to say that I nearly dropped dead with surprise, but I will readily own up to a tremendous gasp of amazement. So, I thought, you are the man! No wonder you wanted to know why I was arresting the Consul! You were saying to yourself all the time that it ought to have been you!

The car passed on and stopped at the meeting-place. The little man got out as Sulzbach walked up, said something to him which I could not hear and then, like thunderbolts, we were upon him. I searched his clothing while he struggled like a wild cat to free himself. Panting, the coat torn off his back, we

threw him on the ground and handcuffed him while I, from an inner pocket, extracted the missing code.

He had plenty of temerity, this salesman of his country's secrets. One might have thought in such a case that any intelligent man would have refrained from carrying with him any evidence of his real identity. But no ; his cunning went deeper than that. His papers proved him to be a Lieut. Ullmo of the torpedo boat service, and I recollected then that when he had been interrogated at Avignon my officer had carelessly mentioned who he was. I had paid no particular attention at the time, the Consul and I being so busy. But I remembered it now.

Did he admit anything wrong in the possession of the secret code ? Not a bit of it !

"You shall suffer heavily for this treatment," he exclaimed with great fury. "I am a naval officer and I have every right to carry the code with me."

"That may be," I replied sternly. "But you are not entitled to try and sell it. You know what high treason is as well as I do."

For a time Ullmo persisted in declaring his complete innocence. It was useless arguing with him. Beyond informing him point-blank that someone had made a rendezvous for that very spot that afternoon to hand over the code in return for half a million francs, I would tell him nothing further. He was placed in the back of his own car, still handcuffed, driven back to Toulon, and locked in a cell.

From thence onward the case against him had to be worked backward, as is necessary in so many of these complicated crimes. The first witness against him was the waiter from the Brasserie de Strasbourg,

who identified him as the man who had spoken on the telephone. In the loneliness of his prison cell, the traitor soon lost his courage. One day he sent for me and told me how it had all come about.

It was a pathetic story, involving a liaison with a notorious woman named Bertha Welsch, whom we had long suspected of being an agent of the German Secret Service. She had induced the unfortunate lieutenant to contract the opium habit, and after hopelessly involving him in debt had whispered to him that he might raise money by selling the secret code.

The possibilities are that Ullmo had been bargaining with both the German Secret Service and the French Government, but this he would not admit. A search of his belongings certainly gave no confirmation of this suspicion, but I was not yet convinced. When I returned to Paris I set to work to wade through thousands of telegraph messages on the files, and at last, much as I expected, one was found directed to an address at Charlottenburg, Berlin, which we knew to be one of the receiving places of the German Secret Service.

I shall never forget the thrill that went through me after scanning interminable numbers of telegrams when suddenly, just as I had almost about abandoned hope, the name "Ullmo" leaped up before my eyes. At the bottom of a message addressed to Berlin was our prisoner's clear and characteristic signature.

Talk about the long arm of coincidence! When Ullmo had turned traitor he probably had not the slightest conception what a trifling lapse of memory would mean to his fate. What had happened was this; when he had sent the telegram he had crossed

out one word in the text. French regulations require that if a message is thus altered the sender must sign his name at the bottom of the paper to verify the omission—quite rightly so. Ullmo had neglected to do this when he handed the telegram to the clerk.

"You will have to sign this below," said the official.

In a moment of mental aberration which was to cost him his liberty for evermore he had taken the telegraph form and signed the message as directed. *But not in the alias of Durant, the name in which he was communicating with the German Secret Service.* Purely as a matter of habit, and no doubt absent-mindedly, he had signed his proper name of Ullmo. Truly, it is the little things that matter in this life of ours.

Twenty years have gone by since Ullmo was degraded from his rank, after previously being condemned to life-long penal exile. By one of those singular chances which made the case so closely resemble the *affaire* Dreyfus, he was transported to Devil's Island to occupy the very same hut that Dreyfus had lived in during the period of his imprisonment.

THE THEFT OF THE MONA LISA

THE THEFT OF THE MONA LISA

OF all the sensational crimes that came my way during my connection with the Sûreté Générale, none aroused anything like the world-wide consternation that followed upon the disappearance of the Mona Lisa in the summer of 1911.

Eighteen years have gone by since it became known that Leonardo da Vinci's immortal masterpiece had mysteriously vanished from the frame in which it hung in the Louvre, but I can remember as vividly as though it were yesterday first the incredulous amazement, and then the voluble indignation, that took possession, not only of France, but of the entire world, when it was officially announced that "La Joconde" had indeed flown, leaving behind her a problem as inscrutable as her smile.

But what a thing to steal! Who would buy such a picture? Some semi-demented millionaire, perhaps, content to gloat over it in the privacy of a locked room, but surely not anyone in the possession of his sane senses.

One could not value the Mona Lisa, because she was not for sale. Had one of those incredibly wealthy American money grubbers offered £500,000 for what was—and still is—the most celebrated picture in the world, he would have been kicked out of France forthwith. Again, there was no question of this catastrophic loss being the result of a chance theft; the Mona Lisa was the only thing that had been taken. Gone she had, removed from the gilt frame in which she reposed so neatly that it betokened the work of a skilled hand.

We thought at first, naturally, that the people responsible were part and parcel of the gang that had been robbing museums all over France much about the same time. The Mona Lisa was the grandest *coup* of all. It was quite certain she was practically valueless, but nevertheless the Government offered a reward of £25,000 in the hope of getting her back, while the detective forces of the civilized world were scouring the art dealers' shops trying to unearth a clue to the mystery.

I, for my part, must say that I had little or no faith in the theory that the theft of the Mona Lisa was the work of a professional gang. Such men would realize only too well that they could not possibly hope to find a buyer for such a famous painting, but as the months went by and the Mona Lisa still remained hidden I, in common with the many other people who mourned her loss, reluctantly but surely began to think we should never see her again.

A year passed and still there came no reliable news of the lady whose enigmatical smile—or was it sorrow? —had intrigued the curiosity of her admirers for so many generations. Clues of a sort there were in plenty; they came not singly, but in thousands, from England, America, Germany, Austria, Russia. How Leonardo da Vinci himself would have laughed had he known of what was happening; when he had painted "La Joconde" he had deliberately set out to baffle his fellow-beings by endowing her with eyes that looked upon you with a strange, fathomless expression. And lo, here was the greatest problem of all come to life more than three hundred years afterwards!

I had travelled all over the Continent and aslo paid

innumerable visits to England investigating stories that the Mona Lisa had at last been found. Most of the amateur detectives anxious to obtain the reward foolishly overlooked the fact that Leonardo da Vinci had painted the picture on wood, and not on canvas, and therefore it could not possibly be true that some suspicious antique dealer who did a flourishing trade with burglars had her rolled away in a dark corner of his shop.

Well, it went on as I say for twelve months and the hunt died down. By then I had charge of the entire dossier of the case, with instructions from my Chief to take whatever steps I liked in the event of reliable information coming to light. The bills that had been posted all over France offering the reward of £25,000 had become tattered and torn ; the wind and the rain had long since effaced Mona Lisa's placid face from the hoardings and to all intents and purposes we had given her up as a bad job.

Then, suddenly, out of the black sea of despair that afflicted us, there came to the Sûreté a letter that seemed to promise the return of the wanderer. An excellent friend of mine in Amsterdam, one Hendrik van Willem, wrote me to say that he believed he could at last put me on the trail of the long-lost one.

He carefully refrained from giving me any too-exact information, this careful Dutchman, but the confident tone of his letter filled me with a hope I had not felt for many a long day. He was a level-headed fellow, a private detective by profession, who in the course of his work frequently came into contact with dealers who handled stolen property. That very same night I took a train for Holland and

the following morning found van Willem awaiting me.

It was a curious tale that he had to tell. At Ghent, in Belgium, he had an acquaintance named Emil de Caen, whose ostensible business was that of a dealer in antiques. Van Willem had found him useful from time to time in tracing valuable *objets d'art* that had been stolen, and therefore he paid more than a little heed to the astounding story which de Caen had put forward to him. He said that he knew where the Mona Lisa was.

But apparently he had no intention of satisfying himself with such a paltry remuneration as the reward offered by the French Government. The picture was in the possession of a Belgian living near Ghent and he, de Caen, suggested to van Willem that it would be more than worth their while if his Dutch friend could find an American millionaire who was prepared to buy the Mona Lisa without asking any questions.

This mysterious Belgian, whom he carefully refrained from naming, had offered him a very handsome commission if he could find a purchaser. He did not know of anyone that might be approached, so he had written to van Willem thinking that he might find a buyer on the understanding that they would share the plunder.

"This is a very strange story," I said to van Willem in the security of his office. "Do you believe he knows where the picture is ?"

"Why not !" replied the Dutchman. "It must be somewhere. Why not in Belgium as well as anywhere else ?"

"It is probably a copy. We have listened to dozens of such tales since the picture disappeared."

"We can but see. This de Caen is not a fool. He would know a fake."

"All right," I said at last. "So long as you are satisfied this man is not an out-and-out rogue we will interview him and soon discover whether he is trying to trick us."

There were quite a number of side issues to be taken into consideration. Human nature being what it is, a reward of £25,000 was a prize worth winning and certainly worth a fair amount of risk. I couldn't be sure that van Willem wasn't trying to bluff me, though he must have known that my Government would never pay over the money until they knew that it was indeed the real Mona Lisa they were receiving.

Secondly, even if van Willem was fair and above board, it was highly probable that de Caen was trying to impose upon him. If an American millionaire could be found to buy the picture, he would have to pay over the money without being able to satisfy himself that it was really Leonardo da Vinci's painting that he was buying. What more natural that such a transaction should be invested with profound secrecy ?

There also remained the possibility that a gang of desperadoes were seeking to lure a wealthy man to some lonely house under the pretext of showing him the picture and then knocking him on the head and robbing him of all his money. Everybody in the world knew at the time exactly what the Mona Lisa was worth ; one could well imagine some none too scrupulous wealthy man saying to himself that it would indeed be a profitable deal to buy for £50,000 a picture worth £500,000.

"One way and another," I said to van Willem,

"this is a dangerous, ticklish business. I cannot possibly decide upon it myself."

What was I to do ? I rushed back to Paris that night and as the express sped on its way through the darkness exercised my brains for ways and means of springing the trap. I had little or no faith that it was the real Mona Lisa that de Caen was trying to sell. The whole thing fairly reeked with trickery.

The Chief of the Sûreté was more confident than I. He listened attentively to the whole story and then, with an authority that would not be denied, ordered that I should proceed to Ghent at once and obtain the picture by fair means or foul.

"If that is the case," I said, "I must be the American millionaire that this man de Caen is waiting for. Nothing else is likely to be successful. But it will cost a great deal of money and I must have sanction to carry out my plans regardless of expense."

"Ah, that will be all right, *mon ami*," replied my Chief in very friendly fashion. "There will be the ribbon of the *Legion d'honneur* and who knows what else for the man who brings back 'La Joconde', to say nothing of the reward. The expense does not matter. You will make your own arrangements and France will pay the bill without a murmur."

Behold me, then, three days later on the way to Ghent, an American millionaire. I had telegraphed van Willem to meet me and I arrived in Ghent in three luxurious automobiles carrying a mountain of luggage and half a dozen servants. And what an asset it was that I could speak English so well ! What Belgian would ever detect me ?

It was not long before I made the acquaintance of de Caen. He had a shop in the town where he sold

LEONARDO DA VINCI'S MONA LISA

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antiques, one of those nondescript places filled with all sorts of rubbish. The man himself was in keeping with his establishment; he was a small, ferrety-looking fellow who fairly oozed double-dealing. Van Willem introduced me and I tackled him immediately.

"Now," I said in a strong American accent, "where's this picture of yours? I am not buying a pig in a poke."

The Belgian showed his palms deprecatingly.

"Ah, no, m'sieu, I shall not ask you to do that. The picture is in the possession of a friend of mine. But he is so very difficult to deal with. I must communicate with him and make a rendezvous."

"Waal," I retorted, "I'm a buyer if the price is right. Get busy."

"M'sieu must not act hastily. My friend is very suspicious and would destroy the picture the moment he thought there was treachery."

It took me quite a long time to reassure the slimy little scoundrel that I was safe to deal with. Speaking ext to no French, it was necessary that van Willem hould translate everything. The pair of them jabbered way unceasingly; de Caen apparently requiring ositive proof that nothing should possibly go wrong, n Willem as earnestly telling him that I was a hicago millionaire whose word was his bond. I tened interestedly to his story that I was worth undreds of millions of francs—at which the Belgian's edy little eyes gave a sudden gleam which made more certain than ever that there was foul play afoot—and various other items of intelligence con- rming my probity. But, to all outward appearances, understood not a word of what was going on.

Two or three days must elapse before it would be

possible for de Caen to get into touch with the man who had the picture, but he would let me know the meeting-place as soon as he could. So, for the time being, I had nothing better to do than to continue my pose as an American millionaire. It was an expensive job, certainly ; I thanked my lucky stars that I had *carte blanche* in the spending of money. There was nothing to do in Ghent, but I made the best of a bad job, "did" all the sights, while all the time keeping my eyes and ears open for what the Americans colloquially term the "double-cross".

Sure enough it came ! One evening, shortly after I had eaten my dinner, van Willem arrived at the hotel wearing an air of great secrecy. He was also in that mellow mood which follows upon the successful negotiation of a bottle of brandy.

"Well, what's gone wrong ?" I inquired as I took him into my sitting-room.

The Dutchman had a confession to make. He and de Caen had been wining and dining together and had become so friendly that he, van Willem, felt he could no longer continue to grossly deceive his good Belgian friend. What had he done but betrayed me ! But it would be quite all right. A new arrangement had come into force. De Caen, van Willem and myself —I fully revealed in my true colours as a detective of the Sûreté—were to obtain possession of the Mona Lisa and to share the reward between us !

But how was this to be done ? In the course of a professional career which had brought me into contact with many varieties of what the Yankees call the "double-cross" I had heard of a good many twists and turns indulged in by international crooks. But the particular little scheme propounded by van

Willem had quite a novel flavour about it. Briefly, de Caen was prepared to "double-cross" the man who had the Mona Lisa !

He would introduce me as the American millionaire who wanted to buy the picture and when I had obtained possession of it the three of us would share the reward ! There was just one stipulation he had to make ; that was, in order not to frighten off the man who had it I must take with me a considerable sum of money. He was certain not to reveal the exact whereabouts of the Mona Lisa without some evidence of wealth.

"This is a nice little game you are trying to play on me," I said to van Willem angrily. "What do you take me for—a damn fool ?" Things were getting a bit too complicated.

My companion airily waved a hand at me, gave a hiccough or two, and assured me there was nothing to worry about. In the middle of a retort that he had ruined all my plans who should walk into the room but de Caen himself ! Obviously, van Willem had been sent along to smooth the path. They were certainly a pretty pair to deal with.

Our discussion took a very angry turn. I roundly accused the pair of them of gross fraud and suggested the advisability of calling in the local police. But no ; with all the earnestness at his command de Caen assured me that I had nothing to worry about. He would take me to the man who had the picture and allow me to adopt what measures I liked to obtain possession of it provided I would guarantee he and van Willem their share of the reward.

"Why not play them at their own game ?" flashed through my brain. "Fall in with their proposals and see what happens."

"All right," I replied at length. "I suppose I'll have to trust you, but mind you don't play me any tricks."

Before I went to bed that night, I thought it better to report the new development to my Chief in Paris. He telegraphed back that I must use whatever subterfuge I liked so long as I brought the Mona Lisa back with me. But, as I say, the whole affair fairly stank with traps and treachery. De Caen's plan that I should bring with me when I met the man with the picture a large sum of money suggested ambush and murder. But, apparently, there was nothing else to be done. I was more on my guard than ever, daily and nightly expecting robbery. Ghent grew very wearisome and the rôle of American millionaire so tiresome that I made up my mind to find out what was happening one way or the other.

De Caen kept informing me that he couldn't get into touch with the temporary owner of the Mona Lisa, while all the time he craftily searched my face to see how I was taking the news. I knew he was having me watched and one evening, disguised in a workman's dirty suit and a peak cap pulled well down over my eyes, I set out to watch *him*. He was supposed that night to be meeting his principal, but I followed him from his shop and found that he was keeping observation on my hotel.

"So that's your little game!" I exclaimed softly. "It's just about time your bluff was called."

Except that he stayed at his post for something like four hours, nothing happened. Next day he called to see me and related with great volubility how he had met the possessor of the Mona Lisa, who wanted to make quite certain that I would bring the money with me when the meeting was arranged.

"Sure thing!" I replied emphatically. "So long as you do your part there'll be no trouble."

By this time I was convinced that even if there was a picture, it would be a fake. I was to be lured to some lonely spot in the country and there robbed of the money I would bring, if not actually murdered. For all I knew, a gang of ruffians in the pay of this cunning little Belgian rat were waiting for the moment when I should walk in, blindly believing that the Mona Lisa was to be mine.

"What a surprise there is in store for you, my friend!" I said under my breath.

The conspiracy suddenly blazed into activity. Two days later de Caen informed me that he had seen his principal and arranged a rendezvous at a spot half-way between Ghent and Malines. We were to meet at a château which had been borrowed for the occasion. I could inspect the picture and provided I was fully satisfied with everything that had been arranged there was no reason why I should not arrest the thief forthwith, obtain possession of the prize, and return to Paris in triumph to claim the reward. De Caen and van Willem would accompany me to see that I came to no harm.

"But, M'sieu, you must do as I tell you," the Belgian begged. "Do not be too hasty. If this man has the slightest suspicion the picture will never be seen again. It will be destroyed and all our labour will be in vain." He added, as a kind of afterthought, that I must bring the money with me, otherwise I should never even get a glimpse of the picture.

I was getting a little bit tired of all this trickery and welcomed the coming of the denouément. On the night of the meeting, with a nice fat bundle of

marked notes in my possession, which de Caen insisted on seeing, we set out from Ghent in one of my limousines. I had an automatic in my pocket, as did my chauffeur, one of my men from the Sûreté. Ten minutes after we left, another car was due to leave the hotel. It was to contain three more officers from Paris. One way and another, we seemed to be in for an exciting night.

We sped out into the darkness. De Caen seemed to be getting jumpy; out of the corner of my eye I could see him watching me nervously. But he said little or nothing, except now and again to beg me not to act too rashly.

Through long avenues of trees, across apparently interminable stretches of flat country road, occasionally flashing through some tiny village all in darkness, we ran on for over an hour until suddenly de Caen gave the order to stop.

"This is the place," he whispered, catching me by the arm. "You must come with me alone. Van Willem can wait here."

The château looked deserted and I stopped de Caen half-way up the drive to tell him that if there was any treachery I would shoot him dead on the spot.

"Where is your man?" I demanded. "I do not go a step farther until I know exactly where he is."

"Please, please, M'sieu, not so loud. He is at the back in a room by himself. But he may be listening; do not spoil everything by over-rashness."

My hand tightened on my pistol. De Caen went on. He opened the front door of the château with a key and I followed him in, the pistol now in my hand. All was dark. De Caen led the way down a long passage while I, hardly knowing whether or not the

next moment would be my last, anxiously trod closely on his heels.

He opened the door of a large room, dimly lighted by a couple of candles in sconces. Standing with their backs to the fireplace were two men. One glance at them told me I was in a trap. I made a spring for the door when, crash, it was slammed in my face.

Trapped! The money in my pocket I never thought about. I had seen murder in the faces of the two men by the fireplace. Like a flash out came my pistol and I shouted out: "The first man that moves is dead. Up with your hands, all of you."

Tense silence! For a second or two no one moved. Then, slowly, up went the hands of the pair while de Caen stood stock still. I had no intention of making my escape by the door. Danger lay in that darkened passage. Instead, I snatched out of my pocket the whistle I always carried and once, twice, thrice, blew a long shrill blast.

Not a soul in the room moved. I could almost hear my heart beating when suddenly there came a terrific banging at the front door. Still I dared not move. The noise outside continued. I heard a scurrying outside, the sound of voices excitedly shouting, when with a bang that made all four of us jump with sheer nervousness, the front door gave way.

I half-turned round and, hey presto, the lights went out. I fired at the fireplace, heard a scream and a scurry, and, unashamedly afraid, shouted for help.

It soon came, but only de Caen was left of the trio who had been after my money. The other two, as mysteriously as I had met them, had disappeared, and it was not until we had turned electric torches on the room that we discovered the means of their

exit. A door hidden behind some curtains in a corner explained their going and we had to console ourselves as best we could with the miserable little de Caen.

We took him back to Ghent and there, faced with a prosecution for conspiracy to murder, he confessed everything. He had been the tool of the other two who had got away, but although he gave us their names we never succeeded in catching them.

It was after de Caen had been tried and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment that there came the strangest imaginable climax to this extraordinary incident. One day, when I had practically abandoned the hunt for the missing picture, I was dumbfounded to hear from my Chief that the President of the Republic had received a most important confidential communication from the Italian Government.

What do you think it was ? I will give you a hundred guesses and I am sure you will then be wrong. The Mona Lisa had turned up, not in the hands of a thief, but in the safe custody of the Italian Government. Unbelievable, but true. An Italian workman, burning with misguided patriotism, had stolen the masterpiece of Leonardo da Vinci from the Louvre, where he was employed at the time, hidden it until the hue and cry had partially died down, and then sent the picture to Rome in the belief that it was going back to its proper home.

He was subsequently arrested and certified to be insane, as would anyone else rash enough to suggest that the Mona Lisa would be restored to her rightful owners in the astounding circumstances that actually took place.

RAT-HUNTING ON THE RIVIERA

RAT-HUNTING ON THE RIVIERA

THERE was consternation on the Riviera. In the ordinary course of events the fortunate folk who spend their winters in that delectable spot are about the last people in the world to trouble the police but now, as far as we in the Sûreté could understand, half the inhabitants of the Côte d'Azur were simmering with indignation.

Never before in our history had we known such a mass of complaints. From Cannes, which was then only a small but very select little place largely patronized by English people who loved peace and quietness, Nice, Monte Carlo, and even over the Italian border from San Remo, curious stories were coming up to the Sûreté in Paris of mysterious and utterly inexplicable robberies.

On the face of them they seemed unbelievable. As Sebille, our Chief, said in his energetic, uncompromising fashion :

"Bah ! They are telling tales. It is an old trick this, pretending to be robbed when they have lost all their money at the tables."

One could hardly but agree with him. Who could credit the stories of people who said they had been playing in the Casinos at Cannes, Nice, and Monte Carlo, winning considerable sums of money, and then waking up in the morning to find that not only the money, but also their jewellery, had vanished without a trace of its going?

One might have swallowed the yarns if their bedroom doors had been tampered with, or even if half-open

windows had been in evidence to prove that some cunning thief had been at work.

But too often had robberies been alleged by visitors to the Riviera when they found themselves faced with the necessity of meeting their hotel bills without any money. Sebille, like most experienced detectives, possessed rather a disbelieving nature. However, as robbery after robbery continued to be reported, it was imperative to deal with the matter, and three of us, André Benoit, now the head of the Police Judiciaire of Paris, Inspector Henicque and myself, were dispatched to the Côte d'Azur to see if we could not possibly probe this strange mystery.

It is well known, of course, that during the season the Riviera is the happy hunting-ground of half the swell crooks in Europe. Especially is this so at Monte Carlo and Nice, where the play is high and there are always to be seen hundreds of beautifully dressed women whose lavish display of diamonds and pearls are more than sufficient to arouse the cupidity of a clever thief. In the Casinos themselves and in hotels like the Ruhl and Nesgresco of Nice, the Metropole and Hôtel de Paris of Monte Carlo, one might see every night ladies whose jewellery is worth a fortune. It was even more so in the days before the War when Monte Carlo had not become so popular as it is now. Admission to the Casino was infinitely more difficult, and the time I am referring to one could confidently count on seeing half the nobility of Europe around the tables.

The hoteliers whom we interviewed on our arrival had a solution of the mystery that was quite as remarkable as the story.

"Rats!" they exclaimed in chorus. "Hotel rats, Monsieur Cassellari."

"Rats?" I replied. "What is it you mean? Who ever heard of a rat walking into a woman's bedroom and stealing money and jewellery?"

"Ah, Monsieur," said Jules Legrande, the directeur of the sumptuous Hôtel Mediterranee of Nice, "this is no ordinary rat. It is a big black one that flits about the corridors at night when everyone has retired. Often have our *sommeliers* and *femmes des chambres* reported that they have seen this gigantic black rat disappearing up staircases in the early hours of the morning when only the staff are about."

"But a rat," I echoed unbelievingly. "They are talking nonsense. Surely they have spent Noël too well!"

"No, no, Monsieur. It is the truth. Of a certainty, not an ordinary rat with four legs. This one has but two legs and, if I am not greatly mistaken, it is a woman, clad from head to heel in black skin tights and wearing a black mask."

We were at police headquarters at Nice, Benoit, Henicque and myself, together with the local detective force and a representative collection of the more important hoteliers of the Riviera.

"What becomes of this woman, then?" I asked. "Surely you can close your doors and have the place searched from top to bottom?"

"It is very difficult. As Monsieur knows, this is our busy season and dozens of people are coming in from the Casino at four and five o'clock in the morning. Also, there are the tradesmen and the staff. It would not be possible to imprison everybody for the long time it would take to make a thorough search."

There could be no doubt that the harassed Legrande was telling the truth, not only about the impossibility

of confining everybody for some hours, but also as to the clever disguise being used by this cunning thief. Every hotelier had precisely the same story to tell. They had come from San Remo, Mentone, Monte Carlo, Nice and Cannes, angered almost to the verge of distraction at an epidemic that was playing havoc with their businesses. Infuriated women were abruptly terminating their stay declaring point-blank that it was bad enough to suffer the rapacity of the hotel without being additionally robbed by super-clever thieves who apparently did exactly what they liked.

"So you see, Monsieur," said Legrande, with outspread hands, "something must be done. It is true that these robbers may be found among the people we employ. As you are very well aware, we are compelled, at this time of the year, to employ a great many people with little or no character. But if it is they who are committing these crimes and completely spoiling our season, there must be a very large number of them, because there has hardly been a large hotel on the coast that has not suffered."

Well, there it was. After the meeting had dispersed, we went into conclave to decide what should be done.

"There is only one solution to this matter," I said to André Benoit. "I, for one, do not believe that servants are at the bottom of it, though I am prepared to admit the possibility. We shall find, I think, that a travelling band is at work. One of our audacious *gamins* from Paris is playing the rôle of rat. It may be a man, or it may be a woman, but whoever it is, when we have found he or she, we shall put an end to a very cunning scheme."

"That is all very well," said André impatiently, "but how can one account for all these rooms being

entered without the slightest trace? Every person who has been robbed swears that they have left the key of their door on the inside. How do you account for that? This rat, whoever it is, is not a ghost, though I am prepared to admit that the vision of it stealing about an hotel in the darkness of the night is terrifying enough to prevent any servant giving us an intelligent description of it. No rat, as far as I know, particularly one like this, is able to turn itself into a spirit and pass through a door that has not been opened. Tell, me, my friend, what theory you can put forward against that?"

Theory was certainly my only comfort just then, and as it seemed rather a waste of time we decided to interview some of the servants at the hotels where robberies had occurred, to see if a little intelligent interrogation would provide any further information.

But no, all we could get out of any of them was a vague but voluble story of a black figure that moved through the hotel with a sibilant swish, swiftly, almost noiselessly, round about the hours that they had risen from their beds and were sleepily setting about the tasks of the new-born day. None of them, apparently, had the slightest idea where the mysterious presence disappeared. They had minutely examined the roofs and rafters of the hotel expecting to find traces of its hiding-place, but all in vain. Just as closely had the cellars been ransacked from one end to the other without result.

We brought a magnifying-glass to bear on the locks and bolts of the doors belonging to the rooms that had been robbed. Not a trace could we find of their being tampered with. We interviewed some of

the victims, angry ladies of all nationalities who roundly assailed us for our incompetence in protecting their property. In the ordinary course of events I was accustomed to find my knowledge of the English language of inestimable value in my professional duties, but on this particular occasion, as Benoit cynically reminded me after a heated half-hour with a lady who was bemoaning the loss of a diamond necklace, it would have been just as well had I known no other tongue than my native French.

A complete, baffling mystery it remained. We continued our investigations from one end of the Riviera to the other. Cannes was combed from top to bottom. In all the big hotels, in the Casino, along the Croisette, and in every likely-looking café, we hunted for someone whom we might have known as an international thief. In Nice, along that famous Promenade des Anglais where you see such a strange conglomeration of people, we pursued our search for days on end hoping to find in one fleeting glimpse of a face someone who might possibly be the missing "rat".

We took up our quarters in the big hotels and stayed up all night roaming the corridors hoping the "rat" might come our way. We ate expensive dinners in the restaurants, waited upon by obsequious *maîtres d'hôtel* as anxious as we were to run down the rodent of the Riviera.

We haunted the Casino of Monte Carlo for nights on end, working in collaboration with the detectives who keep such a close watch on everybody who enters the doors of the most famous gambling-rooms in the world. It was quite certain that none of the regular criminals who patronized the Côte d'Azur were

responsible. All of them were subjected to a questionnaire of the most drastic description and indignantly but virtuously denied any knowledge of the matter. The season drew to its close and in despair we returned to Paris confident only in the hope that time, and probably carelessness, would provide the key to the puzzle.

Sebille only laughed when we got back.

"Ah!" he exclaimed when we made our report, "so you have failed. There are times when I think I must take up my old work. Did you not search the registers of all these places and come across a name that suggested something to you?"

We had not come across anything of the sort. The Riviera attracts people, not only from all over Europe, but from the four corners of creation, and it would have been utterly impossible to have investigated the bona fides of the thousands of individuals who during the course of the season inscribe their names in the books of the hundreds of hotels on the Côte d'Azur. We could only wait, as I told our highly-amused Chief, and see what time would bring forth.

If you should be privileged to look through one of those weighty volumes kept at police headquarters wherein are recorded the histories and photographs of professional criminals, one thing will immediately impress itself upon your mind: that is, the fatal habit such people have of using the same alias while on business bent.

The perfect swindler should never use the same name twice; it looks suspicious, to say the least of it, when the appearance of a certain individual at some

particular hotel continues to coincide with a complaint to the police about robbery or fraud of some description. One may safely present this piece of advice to the world at large, because I think the crooks know of its wisdom as well as I do.

We might have been looking for our hotel rat to this day had it not been that she—for a female it turned out to be—made the fatal mistake of using the same alias too often. The formidable dossier which had gradually collected in the Sûreté concerning the innumerable "rat" robberies revealed the highly significant fact that most of them had taken place when a woman who called herself the Comtesse de Monteil was staying at the place.

"Did I not tell you so?" inquired our respected Chief triumphantly. "Find this Comtesse and once more I shall be able to enjoy a little peace of mind."

Easier said than done. As far as I could ascertain, the Comtesse possessed at least half a dozen aliases —which shows that she knew her game—and one never knew when she would adopt a fresh one. We traced her all over France—wherever she went she left behind her a trail of victims—as the Comtesse de Manola, the Comtesse de Beaubourg, the Baroness de Vergnes, but more often as the Comtesse de Monteil. Even had we arrested her it was doubtful whether we should have been able to hold her long. One could say for certain that she had confederates working with her and that she handed them the plunder the moment she had obtained it. But how did she obtain entrance to the rooms that she robbed? That was the mystery which made us scratch our heads.

There was no great trouble about ascertaining the Comtesse's real name and antecedents for, thanks

THE PSEUDO COMTESSE
DE MONTEIL

BRANDIN

AGUITTON

CANESSA

CARLSSON

A FEW OF THE GANG

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to the efficient system of registration which we possess in France, we are able to trace the history of all our subjects back to the date of their birth.

This Comtesse de Monteil was in reality of plebeian birth—one might almost say bourgeois to a degree—who had married an impoverished wine merchant named Portal. She had been born Amelie Condemine and, judging by her career, was a lady of a decidedly ambitious turn of mind. At all events, she seems to have informed M. Portal—a meek and mild old gentleman whom I immediately classed as one of life's chronic failures—that she was sick and tired of him and their continual struggle for existence. He must take a room and live by himself while she set about satisfying her longing for the better things of this world.

Madame, besides her forceful, attractive personality, had one or two useful cards to play in the great game of life. Before she had espoused herself to M. Portal she had been a high-class cocotte and, more important still, she numbered among her acquaintances some of the cleverest thieves in the whole of Europe. They, apparently, had been looking for some audaciously-minded female who could successfully combine the two professions, and having found what they wanted in Amelie Portal set out on a tour of Europe to plunder all and sundry.

For two years Madame remained away from her beloved Paris; if the size of the dossier which made mention of big black rats running around hotel corridors in the dead of night was any criterion, she must have been enjoying a profitable time. One could well understand her robbing men, but how on earth did she obtain access to locked rooms and get away

without leaving the slightest trace of her entry? I began to have a vast respect for such a talented lady.

As one incapable of anything wrong she returned to the Capital, still calling herself the Comtesse de Monteil. I used to run across her at Auteuil and Longchamps, exquisitely gowned in the latest confections of Worth and Paquin. Sebille himself even had a look at her, and was constrained to admit that she was an opponent who would be a worthy match for any man's wits.

"The stool pigeon?" he asked when we returned to the Sûreté. "Have you tried that? She may tell something if the right man tackles her."

But you couldn't catch wily birds like Madame la Comtesse with tricks of that sort. I tried a few, but she knew how to keep her mouth shut. Her flat in the rue de Constantinople was but a headquarters from which she sallied forth at intervals to plunder the Philistines. Occasionally, an old gentleman whom the servants thought to be her brother-in-law, but was really her husband Portal, came to lunch or dinner—which showed that she still possessed that spark of domesticity which characterizes most Frenchwomen—but otherwise her visitors were acquaintances picked up on the racecourse or the restaurant.

Well, there it was. We had plenty of other cases to occupy our minds and could not attend to the Comtesse indefinitely. But still the complaints continued to pour in. From Dinard on the Silver Coast, where Madame had been staying with an individual who called himself Baron Paul, there came a story of three rooms having been plundered in the self-same mysterious fashion that had characterized the earlier

cases on the Riviera. A few weeks afterwards came precisely similar robberies at Aix-les-Bains, to be followed by others at Vichy.

The next time we had news of the Comtesse was at Alexandria in Egypt ; she had been staying at an hotel there with one Frandin—who was probably one of her confederates—when a rich American visitor indignantly informed the management that while he was asleep his rings and his pocket-book containing many thousands of francs had disappeared from his room, though the door was still locked and bolted.

Suspicion at once fell on Frandin ; he was interrogated by the director of the hotel and accused of the robbery. But, alas and alack, nothing could be proved against him and he actually had the audacity to prosecute M. le Directeur for libel, have him fined 500 francs, and compel him also to make a public apology !

The Comtesse and her companion came back to France, and one may conclude that the lady deemed it dangerous to travel about with a man who was already under suspicion. So she left Frandin on the Côte d'Azur with orders to commit no indiscretion and joined forces with another "protector" known as Bawer. Their appearance at Aix-les-Bains in the height of the season evoked no comment, whereupon they promptly set to work and the very same night got into a number of rooms, denuded them of their valuables, and were able to depart without even being questioned.

She was very cunning, this Comtesse. She knew, of course, that we were following closely on her tracks and apparently she came to the conclusion that she would play her game from a new angle. So, instead

of the fashionable watering-places, she turned her attention to the more important agricultural centres where there are big horse sales. She had now become the owner of country estates for which she required farm stock. Her major-domo, who accompanied her, was on hand to lend colour to the assertion and add his opinion to that of Madame.

Very amiable was Madame la Comtesse. Fat, prosperous-looking farmers who seemed to have money were made much of by the lady. It was a matter of no great difficulty in a provincial town where there is but one hotel to discover the location of their rooms and Madame, before leaving them after dinner, would make an appointment for the next day to discuss the purchase of their horses. But, sad to say, no business was done. In the morning, when the farmers came to look for their bulky pocket-books, they had disappeared, as had Madame and her major-domo.

There was no trace of any robbery ; someone might have got through the windows and closed them again, though the fact that they still remained locked on the inside rather discounted that theory.

Now, you can't rob a French peasant and expect to get away with it. This time there came pouring up to Paris a perfect avalanche of complaints, with threats of bringing up the matter in the Chamber of Deputies. "So," said Sebille, "it is now time that you distinguished yourselves, otherwise who knows what may happen."

Our sheet anchor was the quondam wine merchant, M. Portal. Him we visited in his room near the Folies Bergeres, demanding to know, on pains and penalties that I need not enumerate, what had become of Madame.

"I could not say, M'sieu. She does not tell me her movements," he protested weakly.

"How is it, then, that you visit her when she is in Paris?" I retorted sharply. "You are lying, and if you do not reveal everything, I shall place you under arrest."

Out of my pockets I produced a pair of handcuffs and dangled them in front of him. I could see the fear in his eyes.

"Come on," I said. "What is it? Where is your wife, or you shall sleep in a cell this evening."

He wailed and he wept, crying that someone would surely kill him if he betrayed the woman. But with the vision of the handcuffs still before his eyes he at last blurted out that we might possibly find Madame on the Riviera that winter. In a new guise, that of the wife of a wealthy merchant, she was going to give the hotels of Nice and Monte Carlo another turn.

"We had better lock him up," I said to Benoit. "It is certain he will communicate with her in some way if he gets half a chance."

So we had to incarcerate our miserable prisoner, though I told him it would not be for long.

"One week only," I promised him. "If you have been telling me the truth we shall not be hard on you."

Once more did Benoit, Henicque and myself take ourselves to the Sunny South, this time in a slightly more hopeful state of mind. I had already telegraphed to the Commissary of Police in Nice asking him to look out for Madame la Comtesse, and by a great stroke of luck, as he told me on our arrival, he had located her at the Hotel Princesse de Galles on the Boulevard Victor Hugo.

"She is calling herself Madame Villers," the Com-

missaire informed me, "and says she comes from Lille. I have not bothered questioning her, for I know you will want to catch her in your own way. So far, she has done nothing."

Consternation filled the face of the manager of the hotel when we sent for him the same afternoon and requested that we should be given three separate rooms adjacent to that of Madame Villers.

"It is impossible, M'sieu. They are already occupied."

"Nevertheless," I said firmly, "you must find other accommodation. If you do not, then you will have robberies taking place, and that," I added, "will empty your place altogether."

He went away shaking his head doubtfully, but telephoned an hour or so later that he had succeeded in doing what we wanted after a great deal of trouble.

"And please, M'sieu, let there be no more unpleasantness than is necessary. Business is already bad enough."

It was getting on for midnight when the three of us took up our quarters in the hotel. The manager took us up the back way, left us in our respective rooms and went below, no doubt a prey to many conflicting emotions. One did not know what would happen. Our "rat" might go out raiding that night, or she might not. I concluded that she would; she was much too cunning to stay long in any hotel, for fear of being recognized.

Our plan of campaign was simple enough. All we could do was to wait behind our doors with the lights out and the doors slightly ajar. The lights in the corridor had been extinguished by our orders, so that the "rat" could see nothing.

The bell of a neighbouring church chimed half-past twelve, then one o'clock, without a sign of our prey. The pitch-dark corridor seemed as still as the grave and I began to fear, when it struck half-past one, that our vigil was going to be in vain.

My room was to the right of Madame's. Benoit occupied the point of vantage directly opposite her room and it must have been getting on to two o'clock, when the first thrill had died down and I was heartily wishing myself in my bed, that the denouément came. A spasm of excitement shot down my spine when I suddenly heard a door being opened so quietly as to be almost noiseless. But there could be no doubt about it. I could just distinguish the sound of the handle being turned. Quietly I opened my door wide and stepped into the corridor ready to pounce on the woman if she came my way.

But quick as I was, André Benoit had been quicker. In much less time than it takes me to recapitulate this thrilling little episode of the night, he had made a jump for our "rat". I heard a sudden shriek of pain and a woman's voice cry out in the darkness: "Oh, you pig. Help! Help! Help!" A terrific scuffling went on.

"Switch on the light!" shouted Benoit excitedly. "She is a tough handful, this woman.

"Ah, would you," he cried angrily, as the woman evidently dug her finger-nails into him. There were one or two more grunts and groans and then, except for heavy breathing, quiet.

The light suddenly came on and then we saw what Benoit had caught. It was indeed a "rat" and a very powerful-looking one at that, a heavily-built woman clad from head to foot in skin tights made of black

silk. Her face was masked and she lay on her back in the corridor with my panting colleague sitting on that portion of her anatomy most likely to take the fight out of anyone.

And oh, didn't she revile us! I had heard a few choice specimens of abuse in the back streets of Montmartre and such-like places, but I must confess that our "rat" eclipsed them all. However, we didn't let her occupy too much time in that direction. Unceremoniously jerking her to her feet we took her back into her room, put her into a chair, and told her to dress herself prior to being taken off to the cells.

That, with the exception of some illuminating discoveries which we subsequently made in Paris, might be said to have terminated the career in crime of the Comtesse de Monteil. In her flat we came across a mass of correspondence from all over Europe, clearly proving her association with the innumerable robberies that had marked her appearance wherever she stayed.

But how had she effected these apparently inexplicable crimes? How had she managed to enter people's rooms, and relieve them of all their money and jewellery without leaving a trace of her coming or going? It is only fitting, perhaps, that I should keep this amazing revelation until the end, because had I told in the beginning how it was all done my readers may have thought: "How foolish not to have known that before!"

I make bold to say that if I were to offer a prize of a million francs for the solution, no respectable citizen could successfully claim it.

The key to the mystery was found by Henicque on the floor of the corridor outside our "rat's" room.

It was a sort of cylinder containing twenty-seven beautifully made tools which are known to the criminal fraternity as "ouistitis". Even that will convey nothing to the outside world, but when I explain that by means of these tools, which are very much like those of a dentist, it is possible for an expert in their use to turn the key of a door from the outside, and to lock the door again after leaving the room, it will readily be recognized that hotel robbery is a fine art.

Madame la Comtesse took her sentence of ten years' penal servitude fairly well. It is true she called us a few hard names, but after all that did not greatly matter. It is one of the trials of the police profession.

THE MYSTERY OF THE RED BICYCLE RIDERS

THE MYSTERY OF THE RED BICYCLE RIDERS

IF you had ransacked Europe from one end to the other, you would have come across no stranger story of a cunningly-planned crime than the one I am relating now under the title of "The Mystery of the Red Bicycle Riders".

It is over eighteen years since this remarkable case engaged my attention and occasionally, as I glance through my diaries and muse over the stirring events of the exciting days gone by, I wonder if it was not one of the most ingenious swindles that ever emanated from a man's brain.

It was in the years 1910-11, while I was still one of the principal detective officers of the Sûreté Générale, that the Banque de France was thrown into a state of consternation owing to the hundreds of forged 1,000-franc notes that kept pouring in from districts adjacent to the Swiss frontier. Most of them came from the agricultural town of Besançon and, according to the reports that were received, they had been foisted upon ignorant peasants who had probably never seen a note for such a large sum before.

At the time I am referring to, 1,000 francs was a comparatively handsome amount. The War had not then played havoc with the value of money and one could say without fear of contradiction that the £40 in English money which the forged note represented stood for many weeks of heart-breaking toil

on the part of the poor, credulous folk who had been defrauded.

But what an imitation! *Ma foi!* I had to laugh when I looked at it, for it should not have deceived a child. The front of the note bore the words "Banque de France, Mille Francs" certainly, but the design of it and the crudeness of its engraving was the poorest effort of its kind I have ever known.

More strange still, the back of this fabricated note bore no resemblance whatever to the real article. It had a large blank space and was more like a 500-franc note than anything else. And the paper! It had no watermark and crumpled up in your hand like a piece of that thin writing paper which you may buy in any stationer's shop for a few pence.

I threw up my hands in despair when my Chief, the indefatigable Jules Sebille, sent for me one afternoon and informed me that the Controlleur of the Banque de France had requested the immediate dispatch of a responsible officer to the neighbourhood of the frauds. Besançon in the depth of winter did not appeal; I shuddered to think of draughty, uncomfortable hotels and the horrors attendant upon the innumerable journeys I would be compelled to make into the snow-bound countryside interrogating angry farmers.

Sebille laughed at my rueful face. A giant of a man himself who lived only for his work, you could find him in his office at the Sûreté at nine o'clock in the morning and you would still find him there at nine o'clock in the evening. Fatigue was to him a word unknown and, I must say, to those who worked under him. Frequently, while engaged in hunting a criminal on the Riviera, I have received

a telegram from him ordering me to proceed post-haste to London, there to engage in another man-hunt.

"It is no use, my friend," he said genially, leaning back in his chair. "Someone must go and you are the man. The Controlleur has demanded that I send the finest detective in the whole Department, therefore I am sending you. What greater pleasure could be yours?" with his most expansive smile.

Besançon in midwinter! B-r-r-r! It made my blood run cold. Winter sports are all right in their proper place, but Besançon! I thought of the comfortable little cafés and restaurants where I was wont to take my modest pleasures and shuddered once again. Sebille's double-edged compliment left me colder than ever.

"A little later will not do?" I inquired hopefully.

"It will not," said Sebille firmly, throwing me a dossier. "You had better look through the papers and be on your way as soon as possible. There will be a nice little reward for you if you succeed in capturing these people."

An amazing case it certainly was, one of the most extraordinary that ever passed through my hands. As I read the reports that had been forwarded from the Public Prosecutor of the province of Dijon, it was not difficult to understand how the peasants had lost their money. A trick had been played upon them the like of which even I had never heard of before. Briefly, a man, accompanied by a woman, had been riding about the province buying cattle from the farmers and paying for them with notes of 1,000 francs, of which his supply appeared to be inexhaustible.

Just about this time the price of cattle was very low and the owners, no doubt, rejoiced exceedingly when a generous buyer, who never demurred at the price and gave but a cursory glance at the animals he bought, came along, paid 200 francs on account, received 800 francs in change from the hoard secreted in the farmhouse, and took his departure requesting that the beast should be sent to the nearest town where he was collecting all his purchases. One could well appreciate how the thrifty men of the soil had fallen victim, to this cleverly-staged robbery, which in many cases did not come to light until some weeks afterwards when they paid their 1,000-franc note into a bank, only to have them rejected as gross frauds. And by that time it was too late.

In many cases, indeed, the fraud would probably never have been discovered at all had it not been that the matter got into the local newspapers. Dozens of farmers who mistrusted banks fished out the 1,000-franc notes paid to them for beasts that had never been claimed and agitatedly came to the conclusion that they, too, had been robbed by the Red Bicycle Riders.

For that, my friends, was the clue, as strange a clue when you come to consider the circumstances, as you have ever heard of. A man and a woman, no doubt suitably garbed for the parts they were playing, riding about the roads and lanes of Dijon on scarlet-painted bicycles, leaving behind them a trail of grief and anger.

Besançon, where I arrived late the same night after interviewing my Chief, was buried in snow. I got out of the train chilled to the marrow, to be greeted by an icy blast which made me regret more

than ever the comfort of Paris. But an obsequious hotelier, his place empty, made haste to atone for the wintriness of the weather with an excellent meal and a bottle of wine which sent me to bed comparatively happy.

The Public Prosecutor and the *juge d'instruction* when I called upon them in the morning could throw little light on the identity of the Red Bicycle Riders, nor were they able to give me any idea where the forged 1,000-franc notes might have been printed. They were certainly not an expert job ; if my opinion was worth anything, they had been made by some small engraver whose skill—or want of it—would have been laughed at in the circles where such things are a business. Nevertheless, they had to be stopped. Hundreds of people had lost what was to them a large sum of money, and my orders from Sebille were that I should stay until the mystery was a mystery no longer.

But to get to the bottom of it was a more difficult task than I had ever imagined. The Public Prosecutor had placed at my disposal an inspector of the Dijon police, but I found his presence more of an embarrassment than a help. I was seeking someone who might know the printer of the false notes and such a person was not to be found in the company of a man known to be a policeman. After a few days I dispensed with his assistance and concentrated my efforts on finding an informer.

I became an habitué of the cafés of Besançon, clad in clothes suitable to my rôle. Night after night I sat in the cafés, drinking innumerable bottles of the sour local wine, my ears and eyes wide open for the smallest grain of news. Within a week I had

confined my patronage to a café frequented by most of the shopkeepers of the town. A word or two I heard dropped about the 1,000-franc notes warned me that it was here I might get on the track of the Bicycle Riders.

They were very suspicious. For many evenings I sat in that dreary little Besançon café gradually worming my way into a little circle of men whom I had marked down. Bottles of wine by the dozen I bought, until the time came when I was able to join them as a friend and turn the conversation to the bank-note robberies that had been so numerous in the district. There was a printer in the party; if I was not sadly mistaken he could give me quite a lot of information about the forged notes.

But the printer did not seem to have read anything about the matter in the newspapers, and for some minutes after my remarks silently puffed at his pipe. It flashed across my mind that I had made a blunder, but suddenly he turned to me and asked if I had one of the notes in my possession. I was too old a hand at the detective game to be caught like that.

"No," I explained. "I've been reading about them in the papers. It seems strange that anyone should pass such things in this part of the world. Besides," I added, "I am told they are terribly bad imitations."

My companion puffed on, took a long pull at his wine and then, to my intense gratification, grunted out the reason of his query.

"If you had had one of those notes with you, M'sieu, I might have been able to tell you something about them. I am reminded of an event which happened here a few years ago."

"Garçon," I called to the old waiter, "bring a bottle of your very best cognac." I wasn't going to neglect this chance.

By the time we had got half-way through the bottle the printer had told what he knew of the 1,000-franc notes and a strange story it was. It had slipped his memory, but he remembered it all after I had informed him what the notes were like.

Some years before, there had existed in Besançon a firm of printers who had committed a serious criminal offence by printing a number of imitation 1,000-franc notes. But the back of them had been left entirely blank, as with the 500-franc note.

"If my memory serves me right, M'sieu," the printer continued, "these notes were delivered to Madame Laurent, the woman who owned the largest café in the town. I was told that she wanted them to advertise a music-hall which she ran in connection with her café, but what she actually did with them, M'sieu, I cannot say. I warned the man who was printing them that he might get himself into very serious trouble, but he only laughed at me."

"This Madame Laurent," I inquired. "Is she still in Besançon ?"

My friend shook his head.

"She is dead this last two years," he replied. "But it is possible that you may get some information about her from Gaby Charlier, the singer. Madame employed her for many years and she, if anyone, will probably be able to tell you more than anyone else."

It certainly seemed a tangled skein. Persistently I questioned the printer as to whether he knew what had happened to these notes, which were

obviously the ones being passed upon the farmers, but he professed complete ignorance. We finished the cognac between us and my companion was becoming a trifle unsteady in his speech. But, he reiterated, it was only Mlle Charlier who could help me further. I could cheerfully have his name and address if I wanted to see him about the matter again, but in the meantime I had better make the acquaintance of the lady of the halls.

I spent a long and tiring day investigating the bona fides of every printing establishment in Besançon. The local police knew nobody in the least likely to undertake such dangerous work and laughed consumedly at the idea. Madame Laurent they had had many dealings with, certainly, a tight-fisted old woman who had been reputed to be very wealthy, but had died leaving next to nothing. Her business had been sold, and they could tell me little or nothing about the forged notes, as far as she was concerned.

But Mlle Charlier proved an altogether different proposition. I went along to the café music-hall of which she was the star, discovered her to be a performer from the capital whom I had seen many times at the Paris halls, and in one of the intervals sent her my card with a request that she would join me in a bottle of champagne.

She had grown a trifle stout since I saw her last, but nevertheless there was still plenty of charm about her. And wasn't she delighted to meet someone from her beloved Paris! At the time I am referring to music-hall artistes were not forbidden to associate with their patrons, as was the case when M. Clemenceau came into office and promulgated

that much-criticized law which destroyed all the old charm of the *café chantant* in France.

Mademoiselle and I spent a most pleasing evening together. For quite a long time we talked about the people we had known in Paris and then, gradually, I dexterously guided the conversation towards Madame Laurent.

"You knew her very well, I suppose ?" I suggested.

Mademoiselle laughed.

"Now then, *mon ami*," she replied, "I know you have not come to a place like Besançon for nothing. Tell me exactly what it is you want and I may be able to help you."

I ordered another bottle of champagne and, metaphorically, put my cards on the table. I told her that the district had been flooded with forged 1,000-franc notes, and that I had reason to believe Madame Laurent had been more or less responsible for it. Mademoiselle's face lit up with great animation and she volubly burst forth into a strange story.

"I will tell you what I know," she began. "You are aware, of course, that I have been coming to this place for many years. Madame Laurent and I got on very well together, but I will admit, M'sieu, that she was a most peculiar woman. I thought, and so did everyone else, that she was very wealthy. Frequently she has shown me piles of bank-notes in her safe. There were stacks of them, but strangely enough she would never pay her debts. To the people who asked her for money she would open the safe, show them these bank-notes and then, slamming the door, ask them why she should be bothered to pay a bill for a few paltry francs."

"Yes," I said, "and what happened then ?"

"Oh, nothing. Her creditors laughed and went away, thinking that everything was all right. But alas, when Madame died they laughed on the other side of their faces. When her notary came to settle up her affairs it was discovered that she owed money right and left and that the so-called bank-notes in her safe were nothing but imitation. Wasn't there a weeping and a wailing!"

The clouds were beginning to roll away.

"And what do you think could have happened to these notes afterwards?" I asked Mademoiselle.

"Ah, that I could not tell you. Possibly Madame's head waiter may be able to solve that mystery. He and Madame were very fond of one another; it was said, indeed, that she always intended to leave him the business. But, of course, there was none to leave. This man, whose name is Albert Lhoison, is still about Besançon, but he is no longer a waiter."

We were getting warmer and warmer. After Mademoiselle and I had parted company that night, with a strict warning on my part to say nothing about our conversation, I turned my attention to the waiter. Mademoiselle had given me his description and also that of his wife, and I had not much doubt in my own mind that I was well on the way towards solving the mystery of the Red Bicycle Riders. But whatever happened, it would not do to waste any time. Mademoiselle's pity might get the better of her discretion, for it was quite certain that she and the waiter must know each other pretty well.

The local commissary of police proved very helpful. In a few minutes he had informed me of Lhoison's address, and offered to accompany me in case I

required assistance. But, from all accounts, I did not fear any physical violence from the man who had been so ingeniously robbing the confiding farmers. Who would expect a waiter to show fight?

It was by myself, then, that I arrived at the mean little house where Lhoison lived. The neighbours who directed me there also took the occasion to inform me that he was leaving for the country next day.

"Yes," I said to myself with a certain amount of satisfaction, "no doubt that you think you are, with a few more bank-notes to buy cattle. But we shall see."

But I certainly received one of the great surprises of my life when I reconnoitred the waiter's dwelling. What I was looking for was any possible means of escape he might have. I went round the back and found no way out there. And then I had a look in the basement and what should I find there but two bicycles, with black paint still drying upon them! I scratched some of the paint off with my thumb-nail and lo, the mystery of the Red Bicycle Riders remained a mystery no longer. The red paint underneath told more plainly than words that here, as in the story I will relate of the Princess of Monaco, was another comedy of *rouge et noir*.

Well, it was time for the denouément. The bicycles were good enough for evidence, but I wanted the riders. Softly I crept up the stairs, knocked at the door, which was opened to me by a rat-faced little man whom I had no difficulty in recognizing as the pseudo cattle-buyer.

Just one of those moments in life that matter! We stood looking at each other, I with a light from

a wretched oil lamp in the hall illuminating my face, he in the semi-darkness in his shirt sleeves, suspicion revealing itself the moment he opened his mouth.

He was certainly nothing to look at, this cunning little shred of a man with his big nose, black, beady eyes and bald head.

"Yes, M'sieu, what is it you want?" he inquired, half-closing the door.

I pushed my way in and shut the door behind me.

"You are Albert Lhoison?" I asked.

"What if I am?"

"I have a warrant for your arrest," I said, "and also for your wife. Shall I place the handcuffs on you, or will you prefer to accompany me quietly?"

From a room at the back rushed out a woman.

"What is it you are saying?" she cried. "Are you a policeman?"

I informed her that I was, whereupon in a second she burst into a torrent of abuse that left me dumbfounded.

"Did I not tell you, dolt, that this is what would become of your damnable cleverness? Fool, fool, fool that I am to have had anything to do with it. Now we shall go to prison, and oh!" going into a burst of hysterics which hadn't ceased altogether when I eventually got her to the police-station.

But what a poor, drivelling criminal was this Albert Lhoison! There are some men who will take what you English call their gruel without complaint. But this snivelling scoundrel fell on his knees before me and, with the tears falling down his face, begged that I would show him mercy.

"It is all a mistake, M'sieu," he whined. "It was Madame Laurent who put the idea into my head. She was a bad woman, indeed, M'sieu, for did she not promise me that I should have all her money when she died, and when I found out that she had none to leave and told her that she had been keeping me working for nothing for years by her lying tales, did she not tell me that I might enrich myself with the notes that were lying in her safe?"

The words came out of his mouth tumbling over one another. Seizing me by the arm, he took me into a sitting-room where I found the peasant's clothes that he and his wife had been wearing. There he also produced thousands of the forged notes, all in readiness for another raid upon the farmers.

He offered me all the money he had made if I would only let him go. When that proved abortive he, rat-like, showed fight. We had a bit of a rough-and-tumble on the sitting-room floor until a judiciously delivered upper-cut knocked the senses out of him. I took him off to the cells accompanied by a bundle of notes that would have made me a millionaire if they had been genuine, left him on the whine again that he had been the victim of a grievous error, and then took possession of the incriminating bicycles.

But I never flatter myself that I got right down to the bottom of this strange case. Lhoison, as he informed me himself when I suggested the likelihood of ten years in Guiana for his sins if he did not make full confession, volunteered the information that there were friends of his all over France engaged in the business. Certainly the forged notes kept coming into the Banque de France for many months

afterwards, until at Marseilles we succeeded in running down one of the men whose name Lhoison had given me. He and his wife each went to penal servitude for three years, and at the trial the Red Bicycles, with their additional coating of black now fully dried, proved the most interesting exhibit of what was decidedly one of the strangest cases that ever came my way.

THE CASE OF THE BORDEAUX BARBERS

THE CASE OF THE BORDEAUX BARBERS

THE thrill of the man-hunt eclipses all the other sensations in the world. Unless you have experienced it, you cannot possibly imagine the tingling excitement that takes possession of you when you are hunting a man. And when your quarry is a murderer, likely to turn upon you like a wild beast when the moment of his capture arrives, the thrill is intensified a hundredfold. Your life or his; there is nothing to equal it.

My long career as an officer of the Sûreté Générale naturally brought me into contact with many thrilling episodes, but none, I think, were crowded into such a brief period of time as "The Case of the Bordeaux Barbers". Accustomed as I was to tackling any kind of desperate criminal at a moment's notice, I certainly felt flabbergasted to receive at Scotland Yard one day while over from Paris on a confidential mission a message from my Chief which warned me that I was required to play an important part in a swiftly-moving drama that was even then drawing to a close. This was the telegram that came to Scotland Yard, typed out for me in the famous green ink used by your police headquarters:

"Cassellari Handcuffs London.

"Jouberthie Pierre, born 6th June 1889 in St. Pierre de Frugie Dordogne (France) height 5ft. 3 to 5, slender build, eyes blue, dark moustache curled upwards, dark complexion.

"Clancier Jean, born in Chalus (Haute-Vienne)

the 9th June 1891, height 5 ft. 3, middle build, round face, large mouth, large forehead slightly prominent, brown eyes, slight moustache, large chin, hair long in front short at back.

"Both of them hairdressers' assistants, are under warrant of 4th inst. from juge d'instruction St. Yrieux for double murder committed Chalus on 30th January 1912. A telegram from your colleague Picard dispatched to Lisbon where murderers intended to embark to America lets me know that Jouberthie and Clancier have altered their intended route and have embarked 9th instant at 5 p.m. in Lisbon on board English steamer 'Augustine' for Liverpool and London.

"Steamer 'Augustine' will be to-night or to-morrow morning Liverpool.

"Jouberthie under name of Gaubert and Clancier under name of Champrade have got first-class tickets to London. Take immediate steps arrest these men on arrival."

The curt, official message told nothing of the terrible story that lay behind the tragedy that was afterwards to become a classic in the annals of the Sûreté under the title of "The Case of the Bordeaux Barbers". Not that the crime itself revealed much of the diabolical cunning that characterizes so many French murders. Briefly, the eighty-year-old ex-Mayor of Chalus and his elderly manservant were found dead on the evening of 30th January, 1912, in circumstances that clearly indicated robbery as well as cold-blooded murder. On the ground floor of the house in a thick pool of blood lay the body of the servant, his head battered to pieces and badly

burnt. There was a strong smell of paraffin, proving beyond all doubt that the murderers had attempted to destroy all trace of their crime by setting fire to the house.

Upstairs on the next floor was discovered the shockingly mutilated body of the master. It lay across the bed, so disfigured as to be practically unrecognizable. The reek of paraffin was everywhere ; the floor and a great deal of the furniture was still smouldering when the local gendarmerie arrived on the scene wondering who could have committed this fearful crime.

Higher up, and luckily for her, alive, was the ex-Mayor's housekeeper, a deaf old woman, bed-ridden, sublimely unconscious of the shocking events that had happened below. The sergeant of police who bawled in her ear the dire news found it impossible to make her understand what had occurred. He had to write down the staggering information that her master had been foully murdered and also that her fellow-servant was no more. But instead of being able to tell him anything that would put him on the trace of the assassins, the old woman promptly collapsed into a faint that left her a muttering semi-corpse for many hours.

It was well-known in Chalus that the old man was a bit of a miser. The house had been ransacked from top to bottom and the considerable sum of money known to be in it had disappeared.

Why had the aged housekeeper not been murdered ? The veriest tyro in detective work would have no difficulty in assuming that the motive of the crime was robbery. In all probability the old man and his servant had been killed, after which

the murderers had begun their search for the money. And when they had found it, panic-stricken at the thought of what they had done, they attempted to set fire to the place and thus destroy for ever all trace of their foul deed.

Who could have told the murderers the secret of the hidden wealth ? There was only one person alive who might possibly be able to supply the solution of the mystery—the deaf housekeeper.

She, poor soul, lay on her bed babbling incoherent words, and it was not until the following day when the *juge d'instruction*, a smart young barrister newly-appointed to his post, took charge of the investigations and remorselessly plied her with questions, that a glimmer of light came. Propped up in her bed, the woman confessed that she might have mentioned to one of her grandsons who was in the habit of visiting her the fact that her employer kept in the house notes and gold running into many thousands of francs.

"But he is a good boy, Monsieur," pleaded the old lady with fear and distress in her voice. "He would not possibly do such a thing. Does he not make a good living as a barber in the village ?"

The *juge d'instruction* did not know, but he made it his business forthwith to see that the movements of the grandson, Jean Clancier, were immediately subjected to the strictest investigation. The message also said that a large sum of money, in gold coins as well as in notes, had disappeared from the dead man's house. Gold was no more common in France then than it is now, and among the working classes at any rate it was practically unknown.

"Gold, gold, price of many a crime untold," as one

of your English poets put it, that was the clue to the mystery. Promptly on receipt of a telegram from the *juge d'instruction* there came racing to Bordeaux one of our cleverest detectives, Picard, who immediately seized upon the gold as the solution of the problem. But, alas, he was too late. Blundering local police had already established the probability of Jean Clancier, the grandson of the old housekeeper, having had a hand in the murders. He was not to be found at his usual place of employment. Instead, with a want of foresight somewhat remarkable in the circumstances, he had bought himself a hairdresser's business in Bordeaux, and was unconcernedly shaving his customers and cutting their hair when the police called upon him!

He and his partner were indeed a strange couple. So short in stature that they might have passed as dwarfs, they withstood interrogation so composedly that the Bordeaux detectives were completely deceived. But when Picard arrived on the scene he quickly unearthed a damning fact which made it practically certain that the Bordeaux barbers were the assassins of Chalus. *The man from whom Clancier had bought the business had been paid with gold coins.*

Like a flash, Picard descended upon the barber's shop. Accompanying him were six armed detectives prepared to shoot on sight. They walked into the shop, but except for a boy it was vacant. Clancier and Jouberthie had flown. The boy knew nothing of their whereabouts and it then became a question of tracing their flight.

Two such extraordinary little men could not go far unnoticed. In the space of a fortnight Picard traced them into Portugal, and by working in

co-operation with the Lisbon police he discovered that they were about to embark on the Booth liner *Augustine* for England.

Here were all the elements of one of those blood-curdling dramas which used to be played at your Lyceum Theatre. On the high seas a prey, no doubt, to the torturing thoughts of the guillotine that awaited them if they were caught, were the two barbers of Bordeaux. Did they know during the time their ship was ploughing the seas to England that the shadow of the knife was even then upon them? The mind of a murderer is difficult to fathom.

You will recollect, my English friends, the flaming sensationalism of the notorious Dr. Crippen case and how he was captured on board the S.S. *Montrose* by means of a wireless telegraph message? I, too, intended to utilize Signor Marconi's invention to catch the Bordeaux barbers, and the moment I received in London the instructions of my Chief Sebille, I hastened to the room of my old acquaintance, Superintendent Frank Froest, who was then in charge of the Criminal Investigation Department.

Only twenty-four hours were at my disposal. Froest agreed with me as to the necessity for prompt action, and in a moment, with that masterly decision that invariably characterized him, he had made Scotland Yard hum with activity. Within less than half an hour of our conference events were taking place which were to have a far-reaching effect on the lives of the murderers, who were then no doubt congratulating themselves on having made their escape.

PAUL JOUBERTHIE

JEAN CLANCIER

A wireless message crackled through the air to the captain of the liner giving the descriptions of the wanted men, with a request that the reply should also state exactly where the ship was touching first and at what time. I was not sure whether it would be Southampton or Liverpool, and in a state of tension hoping that no blunder would occur I had a Scotland Yard telegram sent to the police of both cities notifying them to detain the suspects in case I did not arrive in time.

It was necessary to obtain a warrant from the Chief Magistrate of England. Mr. Froest hurriedly accompanied me to Bow Street and there saw Mr. Curtis-Bennett, the father of your now celebrated criminal lawyer, and explained the circumstances. I had no proper depositions, as is necessary in cases where extradition is involved, but Mr. Curtis-Bennett realized the urgency of the matter and eventually granted me my warrant.

The drama was hastening on. Shortly after returning to Scotland Yard there came a reply from the Captain of the *Augustine* to say that two men answering the description of Clancier and Jouberthie were on board, and adding that his ship would arrive at Liverpool about 7.30 a.m. the following morning.

There was no time to be lost. Froest detailed an inspector named Nicholls to accompany me, and the pair of us, hastily throwing a few clothes in a bag, caught the three o'clock express to Liverpool.

The hours I spent in the train gave me time to settle down. Suddenly faced in the morning as I had been with the task of arresting two savage murderers, and having spent the intervening hours breathlessly rushing round making the necessary

arrangements, I would have been a strange person indeed if the thrill of the chase had not taken possession of me. Would there be a fight on the *Augustine*? I was fully prepared for it, as was my companion.

It was in the depth of winter. The train roared on through the gathering gloom at sixty miles an hour while Nicholls and I discussed what we should do if there should be serious trouble ahead of us. A party of Liverpool police were to accompany us so that if there should be a struggle the two barbers could readily be overpowered.

Liverpool at last! Lime Street looked cold and dismal and I was glad to take a cab and drive off to the Bridewell where the entire local detective force was waiting for my arrival. They did not know for certain when the *Augustine* would make her appearance in the Mersey, but they had been in constant communication with the manager of the Booth Line and, as far as he knew, the time of 7.30 the following morning still held good.

"We must take no chances," I said to the Chief of the Liverpool police. "It is possible that the vessel will arrive in the very early hours. It will be better to be a few hours too soon than too late."

All through that bitterly cold freezing night six of us, all armed with pistols, sat in a little office of the Booth wharf awaiting the coming of the Bordeaux barbers. There was nothing we could do for the time being. Bobbing at the steps below in the black waters of the Mersey was a police boat in which we were to meet the liner.

Three, four, five, six and then seven o'clock came. The riverside awoke to life. Sirens were hooting and

whistles were calling the workers to their tasks as the night slowly lifted and disclosed the forest of masts and funnels that lay all around us. It was time that the *Augustine* showed up.

"Come along, sir," said one of the Liverpool officers suddenly. "She's coming up the river now."

I hurried outside to the wharf. A mile or so away a big liner was slowly steaming up the river. Arrangements had already been made with the captain by the Liverpool police to stop while we boarded her, and without wasting any further time the six of us got into the tender.

I don't think a soul in the neighbourhood knew what our mission was. There were no uniformed men about to give the game away, nor did the police officer who piloted the boat wear anything to denote our identity. The Captain of the *Augustine* had been expressly notified that the two murderers were to be kept in ignorance as far as possible that they were to be arrested. He could, of course, have clapped both men in irons, but our purpose would be just as well served if Clancier and Jouberthie remained unconscious of the reception that awaited them.

The *Augustine* slowed down and then finally stopped half a mile or so from the wharf. The police boat came alongside to where an accommodation ladder was already lowered, while a perfect horde of passengers gazed curiously over the rails wondering, no doubt, who we were and what we wanted. No doubt they thought we were Customs officers coming on board to inspect the ship's papers. The Captain awaited us at the top of the ladder, his face filled with excitement. Easton and Bell, two of the

Liverpool detectives who knew the Captain well, introduced me.

"You have kept the men under observation, Captain ?" I inquired. "I suppose they are not aware what is going to happen ?"

"I'm sure they are not," said the commander. "But what is it they are wanted for ? They do not look a very desperate pair. In fact, I have never known two quieter passengers."

"They are murderers," I replied, "and very bad ones at that. They have brutally killed and robbed an eighty-year-old man and his servant. It was as well, perhaps, that you did not have to tackle them."

"By jove !" exclaimed the Captain in consternation. "If I'd known that I would have had them in irons at any cost. Murderers, you say. Come along, then. The sooner I get rid of them the better I'll like it."

Our conversation was beginning to attract attention. One or two of the passengers heard a whisper of the word murder and passed the news around. The Captain moved off and took us down to a lower deck, where he pointed to a short, stumpy little fellow looking over the stern.

"There is one of them," he said to me quietly. "He will probably be Clancier."

Three or four of us closed in on the man, ready to jump upon him if he showed fight. I must confess he looked to be anything but a cruel assassin. He was dressed in a suit of grey clothes and a Homburg hat, while over his shoulder there was slung an overcoat. Arrest was probably the last thing he expected, for he was smoking a cigarette, the picture of unconcern, when I swiftly approached him and addressed him in his native tongue.

"You are Jean Clancier," I asked.

"No, my name is Champrade," he replied after a moment's hesitation.

But I saw the guilt leap into his eyes. For a fraction of time I thought he was going to make a jump at me. But he did not have much chance. The two Liverpool detectives pounced upon him and had the handcuffs on his wrists before he could fully comprehend what had occurred.

He took his arrest very philosophically. When I informed him that I held a warrant for his arrest for murder he coolly inquired if it was nothing more serious than that!

Without any waste of time we were then escorted to a cabin where we found Jouberthie engaged in the prosaic occupation of putting on his collar and tie. We burst into his cabin, threw him on his bunk and had the handcuffs on him, but only after a terrific struggle. He fought like a wildcat for ten minutes, and the tiny cabin was a sorry sight after we had finally hauled him outside and told him that he, too, was wanted for murder. With heaving chest and wildly disarranged hair he burst into a torrent of invective, calling us a string of names which fortunately for him the Liverpool officers did not understand.

As soon as we had secured our second prisoner the *Augustine* slowly pursued her way and came alongside the landing-stage. The gangway was lowered and the two murderers, surrounded by a body of police, were taken ashore. They certainly presented an amazing spectacle, the like of which I have never seen before or since. Beside the burly Liverpool police officers they appeared to be dwarfs. Liverpool, of course, goes in for what you English

call outsizes in policemen, because in parts of the city such as Scotland Road there are people who are only kept in check by sheer physical strength.

But these Bordeaux barbers; what a funny little pair they were! A passenger on board who spoke to me while we were waiting to reach the shore, summed them up precisely when he said they looked like marionettes. The official particulars gave their height as 5 feet 3 inches but actually they looked no more than a bare 5 feet. Going down the gangway they were almost hidden from view by the gigantic Liverpool men. They had been handcuffed together and, avidly gazed upon by practically every passenger on the boat, as well as half the crew, they were taken on to the landing-stage and there quickly placed in a cab and locked up in the Dale Street police-station.

A more prosaic pair of murderers I have never encountered. Jouberthie, I think it was, said nothing but "The devil" when he knew exactly what he had to face, while the other man said nothing at all. Nicholls and I, accompanied by two of the Liverpool men, took them off to London the same day in a reserved carriage and lodged them in cells at Bow Street the same evening. Beyond a jemmy and a chisel bearing bloodstains and a few of the gold coins which had belonged to the ex-Mayor, we found no actual traces of their crime. In due course they were extradited to France and put on their trial at the Assizes of Limoges. The old housekeeper was practically the only witness we could call against them, and it may have been that fact that the death sentence that was passed upon them was subsequently commuted to penal servitude for life.

THE BLACKMAILING BUTLER

times, he asked the Princesse to tell me exactly what had happened.

She had received a number of threatening letters, anonymous, of course, telling her that if she did not deposit 1,000,000 francs in Bank of France notes in a certain hollow tree trunk which existed on her estate he, the writer, would expose her to the world.

Sebille handed me one of the letters when the Princesse had finished relating her story. It was written on that square-ruled paper which is so frequently sold in cafés and restaurants, and except for the fact that the writing was obviously disguised it contained little or nothing in the way of clues.

I asked the Princesse, and also M. de Lara, many questions. They had no particular suspicions, except that the blackmailer must be one of the servants. But who? They could fix no one definitely, and eventually it was arranged that I should visit the Princesse's château in some guise that would enable me to move about unsuspected.

When they had gone Sebille told me a little more. The Princesse, it seems, had quarrelled with her royal spouse. There had been a case in the French courts and a deed of separation, which among other things gave the Princesse the castle of Haut Buisson in the Department of the Sarthe. Isidore de Lara had come to see her on some business connected with his numerous musical enterprises, and he had not been there more than a few days before the blackmailing began.

They had been close friends in the happy days when the Princesse queened it over the carefree Monogasques. For some years de Lara was the musical director of the Monte Carlo Opera House,

so it was only natural that he and the Princesse should know each other exceedingly well. In any case, he was a man with the unconventional nature of the born artiste, and he probably had no idea, when he went to stay at the Princesse's château, that he might be giving rise to scandal.

The Princesse herself was surrounded with a halo of romance, even in France, where there are many people with strange stories behind them. She had been born Alice Heine, the daughter of a wealthy New Orleans banker. Coming to France in the early 'twenties, an exquisite beauty who set all men's hearts aflame, even if she had not been dowered with the additional glamour of being the heiress to a huge fortune, what wonder that she should contract a marriage with one of the greatest noblemen in France—the Duc de Richelieu, a descendant of the famous Cardinal who was the real ruler of France in the later days of the Bourbon kings.

When the Duc died some years afterwards, leaving behind him a son who succeeded to his title, the Duchesse, whose beauty had mellowed with the passing of time, took unto herself a second husband, His Highness Prince Albert of Monaco. The Prince himself had already been married, his wife having been Lady Mary Douglas Hamilton, the daughter of the Scottish Duke of Abercorn. But the union was annulled by special dispensation of the Pope, and when the Prince offered to share his tiny Principality with the lovely Duchesse de Richelieu he could congratulate himself that he was not only espousing great beauty but also immense wealth.

Strangely enough, I had previously been engaged in a highly confidential matter for a Prince of Monaco.

This was Prince Louis, who now reigns in that picturesque castle which overlooks the Bay of Monaco. I had served with him in Africa during my time in the Army, and when I became an officer of the Sûreté he sent for me to obtain possession of his daughter who was being detained by relatives against his will.

It may well be imagined, then, that I felt more than a slight interest in the trouble which was threatening to wreck the happiness of Princesse Alice of Monaco.

"You shall have *carte blanche*!" said Sebille after we had talked the matter over. "It is not a case for definite instructions. Use your wits and do just what you like. If it is the Mafia then you will not need me to warn you to be careful."

Sebille agreed with me that it would be hopeless to take up my residence at the château as a detective officer. But to a man like myself, who spoke English just as well as my native tongue, there was a disguise ready and waiting. I should become an English visitor, not, perhaps, of equal rank with the Princess and her friends, but sufficiently important to have a certain amount of authority about the place.

"I have it!" exclaimed Sebille banging his desk. "You shall become a landscape gardener specially brought from England by the Princesse to lay out her grounds. That will enable you to move about without arousing suspicion and also allow you to ask the servants as many questions as you like. I shall write to the Princesse this night and inform her that you are to be Mr. John Scott of England. She is a clever woman; she will see that you receive all the help you require."

I am fairly phlegmatic, but I felt quite a thrill of

excitement as I set off on my hunt for the blackmailer. If it was indeed the Mafia then I might end my days with a knife in my back, and I had no fancy for that. In my pocket I carried a tiny automatic pistol.

Familiar as I was with the stories that were current all over France as to the Princesse's wealth, I was nevertheless profoundly amazed when I saw the vast extent of her domain. It was practically a province in itself, graced by a château which was in reality a palace. Rolling stretches of forest attracted the eye as far as one could see and, as was more or less to be expected, the Princesse lived in regal state. I was ushered into the great hall on my arrival by two gorgeously-clad flunkies, with half a dozen more in the background.

In the privacy of a study, the Princesse told me exactly what had happened since her return. Another blackmailing letter had come, with the additional warning that she would be killed if she did not pay the million francs that was demanded of her. This time a crudely-drawn black hand appeared in the letter.

It was in the same handwriting that I had seen in Paris, and I took possession determined at all costs to put an end to a campaign that was fast wrecking the health of the poor lady before me.

"You have Italian servants?" I asked, thinking it more than a little strange that any Frenchman should have any connection with the Mafia. The Princesse smiled wearily.

"There are more than a hundred servants here," she replied. "Certainly there are Italians, as well as French and a few English. But it is impossible to believe that one of my own retainers could do such a thing. I have always treated them well."

"Ah," I said, "perhaps it is that you treat them too well. But if Your Highness will have a little patience, I shall soon get to the bottom of this mystery. These letters have been written by someone who knows the neighbourhood well. If it is not one of your servants, I shall be the most astonished man in France."

Brave words, no doubt, but hardly justifiable just then. From the moment I took up my residence in the château I surreptitiously subjected the staff to a close surveillance, watching more than anything else for a sign that would tell me that I was suspected. But none of the servants appeared to have any inkling that I was anything but Monsieur Scott, the eminent gardening expert from England.

I took my meals with the Princesse and her friends, chatted with them in English and broken French, and generally comported myself like a stranger in a strange land.

The hollow tree, a gaunt remnant of an oak that lay in an open space half a mile or so from the château, had been cleverly chosen by the would-be blackmailer. I had a good look at it and quickly realized the impossibility of approaching it without being seen by anyone in hiding. I did not dare then to ask the Princesse that all the servants in the château should furnish me with specimens of their handwriting. The letters that she had received were so obviously disguised that such a ruse, without more definite evidence, would be worse than useless. The only clue in my possession likely to be worth following was that of the paper on which the letters were written; it was ruled in squares so uncommonly large that I felt certain it must be possible to trace its source.

But the days went by and I began to grow

despondent, while the Princesse, to whom I reported nightly, became more worried than ever. I had ransacked every village within twenty miles of the château and not a trace could I find of the paper that would furnish the clue to the blackmailer. Paper with the ordinary small squares, yes. That could be bought by the ton. But no one, apparently, had even seen any paper with such large squares as mine.

Someone within the château had begun to suspect me. Late one night, or perhaps it may have been in the early hours of the morning, when I was lying in my bed racking my brains over the riddle, I heard outside my window a noise that set me quivering with excitement. It seemed that some person was trying to open the shutters. I lay still for a minute or two thinking it might be a rat gnawing its way through the wall.

Outside I could hear the wind soughing in the trees, occasionally drowning the sound of the grating that had aroused me. Determined to stand it no longer, I suddenly jumped out of bed and switched on the electric light. The noise ceased forthwith; I rushed to the window and flung the shutters wide open. There was no one there. I looked outside, to the right and the left of the broad coping that ran past the side of the château where I slept. But not a soul could I see. I looked round the bedroom trying to discover if it had been a rat that had disturbed my slumbers, but again I drew blank.

For two or three hours afterwards I lay awake expecting to hear the noise again. But nothing happened and eventually I dropped off to sleep dreaming that someone was chasing me through the Princesse's park with a huge hatchet.

The morning came and with it the shock of my life. *I discovered that the person who slept in the room next to mine was the butler.* I spoke to him before I went out and asked him if he had heard any uncommon sound during the night. He was a black-visaged, sleek-groomed Italian, civil enough, but just the type for any villainy.

"No, M'sieu, I heard nothing. M'sieu is possibly a bad sleeper. This business of laying out gardens is worrying him," with an underlying touch of sarcasm.

"Yes, it is," I replied. "I have the greatest difficulty to find what I want."

We let it go at that, but now I was more on my guard than ever. I carried my pistol about with me night and day, expecting I knew not what. I questioned the Princesse about the butler; she had got him from Rome, and as far as she knew he was a man of irreproachable character. I discovered something else. The butler was in love with a pretty little pert red-headed English housemaid employed in the château. What had attracted him to her Heaven only knows. Two more utterly dissimilar types one could not find. He, the suave and swarthy Italian, the quintessence of the luxury-loving Latin, she, a cheeky little Cockney with a crop of flaming hair that the vulgar would characterize as "ginger".

But there it was; maybe the girl's saucy tongue was the attraction, or perchance her red hair had fascinated the man of a race to whom auburn locks are a thing unknown. I didn't know, but for some days I watched the pair of them as closely as I could without arousing suspicion. Not a sign could I see of any secret plotting. They were just lovers. The girl made the butler do exactly as she liked.

PRINCESSE ALICE OF MONACO

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Something like a fortnight had gone by and I was just as far off as ever from carrying out my mission. No more threatening letters had been received, but I dare say the Princesse was beginning to think she must find another way out of her difficulty. Then, one fine day, luck came my way.

No successful detective can possibly work without having a little luck on his side. Times without number have I been despairingly chasing a criminal and almost given it up as a bad job when, hey presto! the Goddess of Chance has suddenly taken a hand in the game. Maybe, by a fraction of a second, you will meet some person who holds the key to the problem.

I had been stretching out farther and farther trying to trace the person who had sold the paper with the large square ruling. One afternoon, at a small wayside café where you could purchase the wine of the country for an incredibly small sum, I sat down to drink a glass of burgundy and ask a few questions.

"Has Madame any writing-paper on which I might scribble a note?" Madame, a preposterously stout old lady, waddled to her desk and produced a couple of sheets of the familiar square ruling. But, alas, the squares were much too small for my liking.

"Pardon, Madame," I said, pulling out of my pocket and showing her the back of one of the blackmailing epistles that the Princesse had received, "but have you any paper with squares as large as these?"

"Ah, no, M'sieu," she replied. "A few weeks ago, yes. But it has all been sold since."

I almost jumped out of my seat with excitement; if the good lady had been of an observant nature she might have sensed something in the wind.

"Could you not tell me to whom you have sold it ?" I inquired.

Madame looked at me rather strangely.

"M'sieu asks a curious question ! How should I remember people who buy a sheet or two of paper ?"

"It is important," I said. "It will be sufficient, Madame, if I inform you that I am a detective officer from Paris and that it is essential that I trace the people who bought this paper from you."

Poor Madame's eyes literally goggled with excitement.

"The Sûreté, M'sieu ?" In such a dismayed voice that I had to smile.

"Of a certainty."

"I cannot remember, M'sieu. But perhaps my son François will be able to tell you."

François was close by, listening with eyes, ears and mouth wide open to this alarming talk. But at the mention of his name he came over to me and told me the finest news I had heard for weeks.

"A month ago, M'sieu, a large automobile came into this village. The gentleman driving it called me to him and told me he wanted some letter paper. He gave me five francs and said any paper would do."

This, I thought, was getting interesting.

"Well," I said, "what happened then ?"

"Just this, M'sieu. We had paper of our own in the café. I brought out a few sheets in an envelope and gave them to him. He thanked me and told me I might have the change," the latter event appearing to be quite a gratifying incident in his young life.

"And it was paper similar to this ?" I asked showing him the back of the blackmailer's letter.

The boy began to grow a little excited. Sharp as a

weasel, he jabbered out that it was indeed precisely the same paper. He, too, remembered it for the large squares. They had had a small stock of it in the café and had sold the last of it to the man in the automobile.

"And this man, boy?" I continued. "What was he like?"

"Oh, very dark, M'sieu."

"Clean-shaven?"

"Yes."

French?"

"I think not, M'sieu. He spoke to the woman at his side in a tongue I did not understand."

"Oh, oh, the woman!" I remarked. "Yes, I had forgotten her. And what would she be like?"

"A strange-looking creature, M'sieu. Small, but with hair that was red."

Tiens! Rouge et noir! The butler and the housemaid! The excitement began to bubble up within me.

"You are quite certain about this, my boy?" I said to him in kindly fashion. "You would be able to identify them?"

"Who would not, M'sieu? It is not every day people come to this village giving away money."

"Good! I shall be wanting you in a day or two. But," I added, turning to Madame, who looked like having an apoplectic seizure, "not a word of this must leak out. Remember, Madame, I am the police. I shall send for the boy and pay him well when he has done what I require."

Things began to hum immediately I got back to the château. Carefully steering clear of the butler, I sent a message to the Princesse and asked to see her privately. She, too, quickly sensed the drama in the air.

"Your Highness," I began in the privacy of her boudoir, "I think you are at the end of your troubles. To-morrow, if you please, I would like to have all your servants gathered in one big room. The villain who has been blackmailing you is living in this château."

"Here!" the Princesse exclaimed incredulously. "Surely you are mistaken? What have I done to my retainers that anyone should treat me in this fashion?"

She looked very ill and worried, not without cause. I could see that the strain had told upon her nerves, and without further ado I plunged into the story of what had occurred.

"You are sure it is the butler?" she asked when I had finished. "It seems impossible."

"I cannot be absolutely certain. But to-morrow will find out. I have suspected this man for some days," I added, telling her of what had happened outside my window. "To-morrow, when you have your servants assembled in, say, the dining-room, I shall have this boy François concealed behind some curtains. He is much too sharp to make a mistake."

If the butler was indeed the blackmailer, I intended to unmask him without a shadow of doubt. The fact that he had bought similar paper to that received by the Princesse was no definite proof that he had written the threatening letters. I told the Princesse that I wanted her permission to demand from all her servants handwriting setting out some of the same words that were contained in the blackmailer's demand.

"Very well," she replied. "It shall be as you wish. But please do not make a scene if the butler is indeed the criminal. Neither M. de Lara nor myself would desire it. You must be very careful."

I had every intention of being that. Very little sleep came my way that night. If the butler had tried to enter my room he would have got a warm reception, for I lay awake many hours working out my plans beyond fear of failure.

I staged the drama about 3 o'clock in the afternoon. The boy, rather frightened of himself then, was smuggled into the house by myself and securely hidden by a pair of heavy curtains which stretched across the entrance to the salon.

The servants, no doubt, were vastly excited at being so suddenly summoned into the presence of their mistress and myself. They filled the room, the picture of solemnity, realizing that something was afoot. Not one of them, I am sure, except the guilty person, had the faintest idea what they had been sent for. Possibly they thought I was going to give them a dissertation on landscape gardening. They watched me open-mouthed.

"A terrible thing has happened in this house," I began. "In the first place, I must inform you that I am not from England at all. I am M. René Cassellari, a Commissary of the Sûreté. I have come from Paris specially to discover a diabolical scoundrel who has been writing blackmailing letters to your mistress. Her Highness has given me *carte blanche* in this matter, and so that all of you may absolve yourselves from any suspicion I am going to request that you come to this desk beside me and one by one write certain words. If you are innocent you have nothing to fear."

One could have heard a pin drop in the room. There was a tense silence, until I motioned one of the footmen forward and told him to write the words I wanted. The man came up and in a shaking hand wrote as

I directed. I did not bother about the women ; one by one I called the men forward, without a sign from the boy hidden behind me. He was to reveal himself the moment he recognized the individual who had bought the paper.

The butler had been hiding himself in the background hoping, no doubt, that my suspicions would be fixed upon someone else. But none of the writing before me in the least resembled that received by the Princesse.

The dining-room was now charged with electricity.

"Come along," I said to the butler impatiently. "The sooner you get this over the better."

He made his way to where I was standing with the Princesse ; the hand into which I thrust a pen was shaking badly.

"Write me," I commanded sternly, "these words : 'If you do not pay the sum of one million francs.' "

For just a second there was tragedy in the air. My hand groped to my side to feel if my pistol was still in my pocket. But as it closed upon it, the butler bent down over the desk and wrote the words I required. He had just finished them when suddenly there came the climax. A shrill voice from the back cried out : "That is he, M'sieu. That is the gentleman who bought the paper."

Tableau ! I jumped at the butler, fearful of what might happen.

"You are the man I want. What have you to say for yourself ?"

He was a cowardly brute ; the fight went out of him on the instant. But it was just as well that I had cowed him, for on putting my hands into his pockets

I discovered a murderous-looking dagger that might have found its way into my heart if I had given him but half a chance.

He fell on his knees and begged for mercy. I took him into the library and there, in front of the Princesse and myself, he confessed to the whole wretched plot.

According to the story he told—which might or might not have been true—he had been ordered by the Mafia to blackmail the Princesse. The idea occurred to him to double the amount of the demand. There would be half a million francs for the Mafia and half a million for himself and his red-headed inamorata.

Yes, it was quite a neat little scheme. After successfully blackmailing the Princesse he intended forwarding to the Mafia in Rome their share of the plunder, while with the balance he and the housemaid were to escape to London where they were going to open a restaurant and live happily ever afterwards.

The sequel? Well, some may think it is quite in keeping with this strange story. The Princesse asked my advice as to what she should do. I told Her Highness that she would probably prefer not to prosecute the butler and his lady love. She fully agreed; there could be nothing but a great deal of unwanted and unnecessary scandal.

But when it came to a question of getting the butler out of the country complications arose. He wouldn't be sent back to Italy under any consideration whatever; the Mafia would want to know what had become of the hush money. I couldn't have him deported to any other country.

The Princesse and I indulged in a little hard thinking, the upshot of it being that the butler, accompanied by his sweetheart, "consented" to go to England

with a sum of money which would enable him to realize his ambition, at least in a modest way.

For the benefit of anybody who may be interested, I might add that he is still in England. He owns a flourishing little restaurant, where he does the honours with great *éclat.*

The auburn-haired housemaid, who rules him with a rod of iron, takes the money. I am not so sure that he hasn't been more than punished for his sins at the château of Haut Buisson, for his wife is a tartar.

Occasionally, when I am in England, I visit the restaurant and have my lunch there. The butler, whose identity I must not reveal, greets me with great deference, though I am sure he has never forgiven me for depriving him of half a million francs.

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND

THE year 1911 was a trying one for the detective officers of the Sûreté Générale. By one of those inexplicable coincidences which so frequently characterize criminal affairs, there was a perfect epidemic of art robberies all over France.

How it happened that priceless pictures, collections of antiques that were utterly irreplaceable, and innumerable *objets d'art* that formed part of the national treasures of France, were being stolen almost day by day in the most alarming fashion, no one could say. The fact remains that museums and picture galleries were being skilfully plundered in a manner that made the good citizens of France fairly boil with rage.

It reached the culminating point when Leonardo da Vinci's world-famous masterpiece "Mona Lisa", perhaps the most renowned picture of all time, disappeared from the Louvre in circumstances that seemed to suggest the work of the same gang. There is no necesssity to repeat here the exciting adventures I experienced in trying to catch the vandals who had stolen "The Lady with the Inscrutable Smile". Those I have already narrated in another part of this book. Instead, I shall go on and narrate the amazing events that followed another serious robbery from the State Museum in Amiens.

A bad case, indeed. Half a dozen pictures, worth perhaps a couple of million francs, had been cut out of their frames. One of them was Boucher's celebrated painting "Lady with a Garter", a picture that no

money could buy. Many other things had vanished. A collection of antique gold coins, worth perhaps £100 in English money for their weight, but utterly priceless from an antiquarian point of view, had also gone. The report we received at the Sûreté Générale was meagre to the degree of hopelessness. Except that the robbers had used candles as an illumination for their nefarious work, they had left no trace whatever.

What could have inspired these strange thefts that were occurring all over the country? We had racked our brains at the Sûreté, asking ourselves whether there had not suddenly sprung up some new and profitable market for the art treasures of France. Could it be that American millionaires were running the terrible risk of buying pictures and antiques that they must have known were stolen? I must confess I could not believe such a thing possible.

On the other hand, as every detective knows, robberies of such things do not often take place by chance. Almost invariably they are put up by some unscrupulous dealer who, if he gets but one-tenth of their sentimental value, is well paid for the risk. The average thief wants to waste no time stealing things that he cannot sell.

The curator of the museum was wringing his hands in despair. The local police could do nothing. There were no finger-prints left, not a vestige of a clue that might indicate the dastards who had denuded the museum of its greatest attractions. All the employees were above suspicion, and not one of them had noticed anyone hanging around preparatory to the carrying out of the crime.

One slight hint, and one only, could the Amiens

detectives give us. Living in the town was an antique dealer of the name of Hannier. He was a gentleman who possessed what you English describe as a "record". In years gone by he had been an apache in Paris, notorious as the lover of that beautiful queen of the underworld, "Casque d'Or l'Algerienne". Ah, me! it seems but yesterday that the hooligans of Paris were murdering each other for the favours of Casque d'Or, in plain English, the "Lady of the Golden Helmet"! She had got her nickname from the fact that she owned the most marvellous crop of golden curls of any woman in Paris, but I am betraying no secret when I say that she was an out-and-out vampire who had bewitched many men to ruin. She herself, indeed, also possessed a history. Her father was the famous Pietro the Wrestler, while her mother had been Anna Delmas, once upon a time the darling of the music-halls.

But Casque d'Or, known in the records of the Sûreté as Julia Dalmazzo, was a lady strongly inclined to vindictiveness. With her own fair hands she would knife an unfaithful lover, and when we received at the Sûreté the information that her old flame Hannier was suspected of participation in the robbery at Amiens, it occurred to me that here was the opportunity for the display of a little cunning. What was it your English poet Congreve wrote?

> Earth hath no rage like love to hatred turned,
> Nor Hell a fury like a woman scorned.

Maybe, I thought, pretty little Casque d'Or will help us in discovering whether Hannier had had a hand in what looked at first sight a baffling mystery.

It was certainly a good many years since she and Hannier had lived together, but the story was still told of the humiliating manner in which he had deserted her and gone to Amiens to lead a respectable life. Casque d'Or had not forgotten him, even if he had forgotten her.

Besides, there were other considerations which might influence the lady towards assisting me. To be quite precise, we had a warrant for her. Not a very serious matter, certainly; it would have meant three months' imprisonment at the most, but one could surmise that our luxury-loving Casque d'Or wouldn't in the least appreciate the rigours of prison life if they were possibly avoidable.

I sought her out and tactfully explained the situation.

"You know," I said, over a glass of wine in a Montmartre café, "we have a warrant for your arrest. But it is just possible we shall not execute it if you will agree to help us in the way we want."

Casque d'Or was no fool.

"What is it I have to do?" she inquired shortly. "If you ask me to betray my friends I shall refuse."

"Perhaps it is not a friend," I replied. "What would you say if I should ask you to go and visit your old lover, Hannier?"

I watched her shrewdly to see how she would take it. True enough, I had not been mistaken. The hatred blazed out of her eyes and she hissed at me in a tense whisper: "The filthy pig! Give me but half a chance and I shall kill him."

"You are not wanted to do anything so foolish as that," I retorted sharply. "We think Hannier has been concerned in the robbery from the museum at

Amiens. It is just a matter of finding someone who can obtain his confidence."

Casque d'Or smiled—but not very pleasantly.

"Ah," she said slowly, "that would, indeed, be a happy revenge. He would repay me for all my sufferings by many years in gaol, eh ?"

"Undoubtedly, if he has handled the missing property."

"Then you may count on me," said Casque d'Or, nodding her pretty head determinedly. "Tell me what it is I have to do ?"

I explained my plans in full and two days later Casque d'Or and myself went on to Amiens. My own part in the affair was not a particularly enviable one. Casque d'Or being what she was, I became for the nonce an apache, ostensibly engaged in the ticklish duty of "protecting" the lady.

That very same night Casque d'Or was around the streets of Amiens trying to run into Hannier. It had been part of my scheme that she should meet him accidently ; it wouldn't have done at all to have walked into the shop where he conducted an antique dealer's business.

Talk about complications ! I had left Casque d'Or to find her old lover as best she could and had gone to bed never dreaming for a moment that things might go wrong. But at half-past two in the morning I received the shock of my life. Without a word of warning two policemen burst into my room, hauled me out of bed, and proceeded to give me a most unmerciful pummelling. Bang ! bang ! bang ! went their truncheons while I, hitting back as best I could, bawled for help.

They threw me on the bed and handcuffed me.

When I had got my breath, I demanded to know the reason of this outrageous treatment.

"We know who you are," they exclaimed in chorus, also panting hard. "We have your woman in a cell. She has robbed a man and already confessed that she is a thief from Paris. Come along, apache."

They permitted me to dress myself and no doubt, with my rakish Paris clothes and a cap that only an apache could wear, I looked what I pretended to be. I might have informed them then and there who I was and what I had come to Amiens for. But just then it did not suit me to do so. As meekly as a lamb I went off to the police-station to be interrogated and there, faced with the prospect of spending the rest of the night in a cell, I thought it better to send for M. Guenin, the Commissary of Police, as well as his detective-inspector Leroy, and explain the situation. I produced my credentials and told them I must have their help.

They burst out laughing—as who would not seeing one of the leading officers of the Sûreté Générale dressed up as an apache with all his beautiful plans suddenly gone wrong?

"Well," said Guenin, "we have your lady-love here. She is indeed a little spitfire. She has been screaming murder ever since she was brought in until we threatened to have her gagged."

"What has happened then?" I inquired.

"Just what you might have expected," replied Guenin, a trifle tartly. "Your lady friend found the instincts of her trade too much for her. She met Hannier all right, and for an hour or two, so he says, they got on quite well. They got drinking together and Hannier became drunk. Then our little cocotte

started to upbraid him. Quietly at first, then so loudly that she and the man were put out in the street. She finished up by stealing his gold watch and chain and running off. But we found her at your hotel and she was good enough to inform us that you, also, were staying in the same place. You cannot complain at being arrested yourself, my dear Cassellari."

"No, I dare say not," I said. "Nevertheless, now that the woman is no more use to me you had better keep her in gaol until I have finished my investigations here. Who knows but that she may now try to vent her spite on me?"

A comical kettle of fish if you like! Casque d'Or looked very dejected in her cell and instead of being vengeful wildly implored me to get her released at all costs. She would do anything I liked if only she could go free.

"No, I cannot help you for the present," I said. "In a few days, perhaps, you shall have your liberty, but not just yet."

I left the lady in bitter tears and went on my way —after I had dressed myself a little more respectably —to try and ascertain the fate of the missing treasures. Hannier was brought into the police station. It was many years since I had seen him and he pretended not to recognize me.

"Where are the pictures?" I demanded point-blank in the privacy of the Commissary's room.

"How should I know?"

"A man like you does not live in Amiens for nothing," I retorted sharply. "If you have not had the pictures yourself you know who has got them."

"I, my knowing friend?"

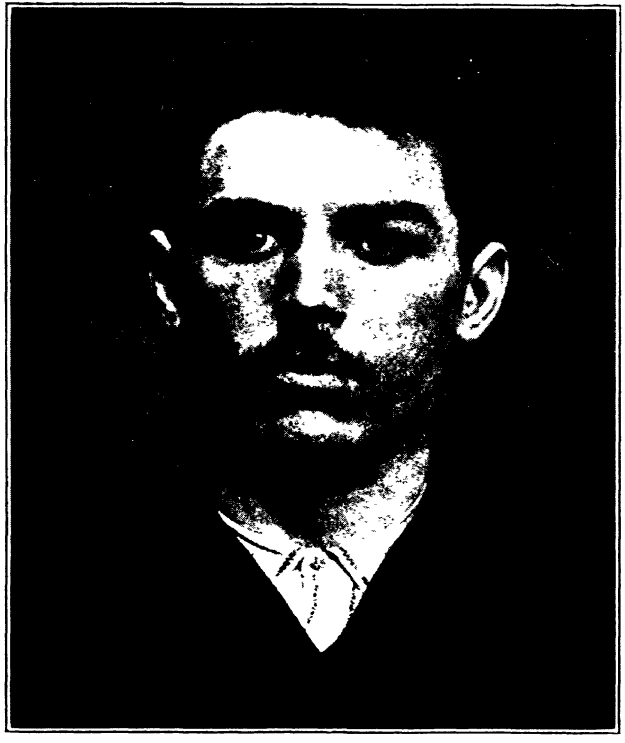
"Yes, you. At least you will know, or be able to give me some hint as to what has happened to them."

For half an hour, across the Commissary's desk, we parried and fenced with each other. I threatened that I would detain him in custody on suspicion of being concerned in the robbery, until at last his courage gave way and he mentioned a name that almost made me gasp with astonishment.

Von Helsing ! Who would have thought it ? Captain Otto von Helsing, a man who was not only a German aristocrat, but also possessed the reputation of being one of the master criminals of the world. It seemed incredible, until Hannier, remorselessly plied with questions, revealed that the pictures and the gold coins had been stolen by a couple of notorious thieves who had taken them over to London and there sold them to von Helsing.

I knew him well, of course. What detective did not ? A heavy gambler, he had been involved while serving in the Prussian Guard in a terrible card-sharping scandal which had resulted in his being dismissed the German Army. He was a tall, exceedingly distinguished-looking man who had afterwards degenerated into one of the cleverest card-sharpers in the world. His name was to be found in police records all over Europe as the associate and master brain of the international tricksters who used to work the Atlantic liners.

I had frequently met him in London, which he usually made his headquarters. One thing about him was absolutely certain ; if he had gone back to his native land he would have been arrested and charged with high treason. Rightly or wrongly, the German



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CASQUE

Government suspected him of betraying German spies operating in France, and though I am not prepared to say whether this was actually so, the fact remains that our own authorities had never molested him during his frequent visits to Paris. At one time, at the request of the German Government, he had been arrested in India and charged with some far-distant offence for which his extradition was required. Von Helsing himself knew what he was really wanted for ; if he had been sent back to Germany he would probably have spent the remainder of his life in a fortress. So he fought the extradition proceedings tooth and nail and won, but ever afterwards studiously held aloof from political affairs.

A more remarkable man I never met. An aristocrat to his finger-tips, I had been on friendly terms with him for many years. He was a man you could not help liking, and if he got his living by his wits he at least played the game in a way one could not but admire.

I knew so much about him, indeed, that I knew of the mysterious house he occupied in the West End of London, or rather shall I say two houses. His residence was the hiding-place of half the criminal secrets of Europe. In one of the houses he lived for all the world to see, surrounded by luxurious furniture, pictures and china, with a staff of servants to whom his slightest word was law. That was the house where he received you as an ordinary guest.

It was in the place next door, that you found the real von Helsing, the man who planned some of the greatest and most sensational coups the world has ever known. For all I know, his may have been the brain behind the Amiens robbery. But if it was, I would have been

had happened to the missing treasures, but he agreed with me as to the desirability of depending more upon von Helsing's good graces than threatening him with arrest.

In my wildest dreams I never anticipated what would happen on the morrow. I duly kept the appointment at Frascati's expecting to meet not only von Helsing but also the Rajah. A table had been reserved for us and as I was the first to arrive I sat down alone. It was only laid for two.

"How is this ?" I asked the waiter. "I am lunching here with two other gentlemen."

"I am only carrying out my instructions, sir. The Rajah has just telephoned to say that he will meet you here in a few minutes."

"The Rajah !" I exclaimed. "But I was to be the guest of Captain von Helsing."

The waiter did not know. He appeared to think I was an amiable lunatic, so he merely shrugged his shoulders and went off. Just then a tall, swarthy man, faultlessly dressed in English morning clothes, came along. I took him for what he appeared to be, a native of India. But to my utter astonishment it was von Helsing !

He laughed at my amazement.

"I am good at disguises, yes ?" he inquired.

"You're marvellous," I informed him. "But, tell me, why is it you go about so ?"

He waved at me a hand that was indeed the hand of a black man.

"Just a little card party to-night, that is all. Who would suspect an Indian Rajah of having anything but plenty of money ?"

"Now," he went on, "about these treasures of yours.

I am sorry to tell you it is impossible to get your pictures back. They have already been sent to America and I could not have them returned even if I would. But you shall certainly have your coins. I have had to buy them, but that does not greatly matter. Will you take them yourself ?"

I must admit it was a most embarrassing situation. Compounding a felony is at the best of times a serious matter and I didn't feel at all sure how the Chief of the Sûreté would regard it. Von Helsing and I ate our lunch together and I told him that the best thing to do would be to forward the coins direct to Paris.

"You will not tell me what has become of the pictures ?" I asked.

"I cannot. I do not even know myself."

There was nothing more to be obtained by remaining in London. I returned to headquarters in Paris and a day or two later, after I had explained to my Chief that the collection of coins would probably be sent to him, they duly arrived and are now back in the museum at Amiens. But the pictures have never been seen from that day to this, and as far as I am aware someone in America has the beautiful "Lady with a Garter" more or less ignorant of her real value.

But there was a sequel to von Helsing. Some months later I happened to be in London again when Froest suggested that I should go to Bow Street police court where I would see an old friend of mine. To make sure that I went, he instructed one of his inspectors to accompany me, a very smart officer named Burch, who was undoubtedly in the secret. But all Burch would tell me was that they had caught an astounding international crook who had eluded them for a very long time.

I waited in court while they were disposing of half a dozen other cases, and then to my unbounded amazement, von Helsing was brought in. He looked as aristocratic as ever and as fashionably attired as though he had just left his Mayfair house. I would have given almost everything I possessed so that he should not have seen me and thought, probably, that I had come to gloat over his downfall.

But whatever his feelings were—and they must have been bitter with such a man—he looked me straight in the face without the slightest sign of recognition. He took his place in the dock while I listened to the charge against him, that he had been concerned in fraudulently obtaining a large sum of money from some young fool in London. The evidence was so weak that he was eventually acquitted, but I never saw him again.

The last thing I ever heard about him was from Switzerland. It appears that he made the acquaintance of one of the Kaiser's sons who was then staying at an hotel in Geneva. What did von Helsing do, in the company of another equally plausible international adventurer, but introduce himself to the royal visitor as a wealthy German, and then sit down with him to a game of cards in which the Kaiser's son was fleeced of every mark he possessed!

THE SINISTER MARQUIS

THE SINISTER MARQUIS

I HAD not often seen my Chief give way to rage, but he was certainly in what you English call a rampageous mood that September morning in the year 1910 when he called me into his office, and flourishing a dossier at me, barked: "Cassellari, this must be stopped."

I knew what was troubling my Chief. For was it not the talk of the Sûreté—and indeed of all Paris—that a cunning gang was at work robbing banks, merchants' offices, private dwelling-houses, and even small shopkeepers, in a manner so diabolically clever as to make it certain that a master criminal was at the back of it all.

He was no ordinary burglar, this man whom we thought to be responsible for at least thirty distinct crimes. The safes in little suburban banks had been dynamited and relieved of all their money and securities, which proved, of course, that an expert had done the job. In practically every instance securities had disappeared, some of which had found their way back to the Bourse.

The average housebreaker instinctively fights shy of such things. Money, yes, and jewellery, as much as you like, but nothing so readily traceable as Rentes and bonds bearing incriminating numbers. And there was another and even more serious side to this epidemic which was having a bad effect on the *morale* of the good citizens of Paris. Some of the robberies had been aggravated by murderous assault. Once or twice, indeed, the gang had come perilously close

to murder, and I am not guilty of the least exaggeration when I say that the entire detective force was engaged scouring Paris for the miscreants.

This was the position, then, when the Chief sent for me to unravel the mystery. It had been impossible to obtain the slightest clue to the identity of the robbers. Strategy was necessary and I, as a man who spoke English almost as fluently as my native French, was the one who might be successful in carrying it out. Had I not spent a good many years of my life in England, and thereby become conversant with the idioms of the English language?

"There is only one way you will catch these men," said my Chief. "You must meet cunning with cunning. If you are very careful not to give yourself away, you may be able to discover who is dealing in these stolen bonds. You know, of course, that they are being sold in London and Brussels as well as here."

I knew it, naturally, for there is always a big international trade in stolen securities which is carried out by a very high-class type of criminal, men who are much too clever and too well versed in the ways of the world to be caught by anything but artifice. I left my Chief's office that morning with permission to do what I liked provided I brought the malefactors to justice.

When I unostentatiously intruded myself into the bustling crowd that frequents the Bourse every day my own friends would not have known me. I had become an Englishman once again. I wore a light tweed suit, one of the Homburg hats which King Edward had popularized, spats—in Paris they would not believe you were English unless you wore spats—and I also carried a pair of gloves and a walking-

stick. The gloves were the finishing touch ; it is only the English who carry them.

And my accent ! I doubt whether it would have passed muster as pure Anglo-Saxon in Piccadilly—or even in Poplar—but on the Paris Bourse where my raiment spoke for itself in more senses of the word than one I have no doubt they took me for the real Piccadilly Johnny. I had no French worth mentioning ; if you had heard me say *"Merci beaucoup"*—with emphasis on the "boko", you would probably have blushed with shame to think that I belonged to England.

For the better part of a week I was to be seen about the Bourse and, as was only natural, my presence began to be noticed. Sharp eyes had already marked me down as a rich Englishman with money to burn, and thus it came about that I made the acquaintance of the Marquis de la Houpliere.

A mysterious individual was the Marquis. I knew him well enough by repute as a man of good family who had taken to the Stock Exchange as a means of getting a living. But for a long time there had been whispers that the Marquis was not all he pretended to be. He kept strange company, and the reputable brokers of the Bourse fought shy of him. For all that he was the grand *flaneur*, as notorious in high society as he was at the gaming tables of Deauville and Monte Carlo. He was a racehorse owner, a yachtsman, and one of the best-dressed men in Paris. What wonder, then, that I looked at him with a good deal of curiosity when I was steered into his office near the Bourse by a tout to whom I had guardedly made it known that I had come over from England prepared to buy bonds that were better sold abroad.

It had not been easy work. What between dodging innumerable people I knew and being careful to speak nothing but broken French of the most atrocious description, I had gone through a devil of a time. But over the absinthe, when men grow confidential and women tell you the story of their lives, I had whispered that I, M. Harry Castle, had a nice, profitable market for bonds where no questions are asked and none, indeed, wanted.

I had chosen my stool-pigeon well. We knew him at the Sûreté as a man who had long been engaged in all manner of questionable dealings, and he did not suspect, so attractively did I bait the trap, that I was an agent of the police myself, younger then, and perhaps more innocent-looking, than I am to-day.

Cautiously I had already bought a few bonds which had been stolen from the Brasserie Comte Robert only a few days previously. My stool-pigeon informed me they had come through the Marquis de la Houpliere and, over a friendly glass in the Café Chat Noir hard by, urged upon me the necessity of making the acquaintance of a very astute gentleman.

"He is clever, the Marquis," murmured my man. "I shall introduce you to him, and on my recommendation he will find you what you want. But silence must be observed, *mon ami*. The Marquis is a dangerous man to meddle with."

"Am I not accustomed to dealing with such people?" I replied impatiently. "Let us have another glass of this excellent Dubouche and say no more about the matter. You must see the Marquis and make an appointment for me. I shall meet you here to-morrow."

The Marquis, I found, was a middle-aged gentleman with the grand air, very condescending in his manner,

as bald as a billiards ball, but boasting a beautiful pair of long flowing moustaches which he twirled in his fingers as he talked. There was nothing about his office to denote the headquarters of a sinister master crook. Clerks were busily engaged in their duties and telephone bells rang continuously.

The office itself, furnished in oak without regard to expense, was embellished with many rare prints upon the walls and an Aubusson carpet which must have been worth a fortune in itself. My eyes took a quick survey of a massively impregnable safe built into the wall which doubtless housed the Marquis's dangerous secrets. But I did not stare too long.

Unless you have been an agent of the Sûreté, you cannot realize the feelings that take possession of you when you walk into the presence of a criminal to whom life is nothing. So I was on my guard, fearful of immediate discovery. But the Marquis suspected nothing. He gave me a courteous bow, shook hands with me, and murmured his appreciation of making the acquaintance of M. Castle. I couldn't speak French, the Marquis had no English. Our mutual friend stepped into the breach as interpreter while I made it known that I had come over to Paris to do a deal in securities. The Marquis looked at me all the time I was talking; his quick, darting eyes never left my face.

"Yes," he said at length, "it is possible I may be able to accommodate your friend," nodding at me. "Occasionally I have through my hands bonds for which," he added with cynical significance, "there is not a great sale in Paris. Not many, perhaps, but sufficient to make M. Castle's visit worth while."

All this was gravely translated for me, quite

unnecessarily, but I kept my face straight. I shrugged my shoulders disparagingly.

"Tell the Marquis," said I, "that I do not deal in trifles. I am a rich man and I can buy a million francs' worth of securities. I will pay him one-third of their value. If he has nothing of any consequence to offer then I am wasting his time and mine."

I leaned back in my chair, nonchalantly crossed my legs, and gazed at the ceiling. A heated colloquy took place between the tout and the Marquis while I, to whom the talk was apparently so much Chinese, kept my eyes upwards. It went on for the better part of ten minutes, during which time I heard the interesting news that I was the biggest buyer of stolen bonds in all England. I had certainly primed my man well. Judicious murmurs of famous international crooks who were bosom friends had firmly convinced him that I was indeed one of the great fraternity.

The Marquis began to grow interested. His eyes narrowed and he twirled his great moustaches with ferocious vigour.

"If that is the case," he at last remarked, "I must see what I can do. Probably I may be able to offer your friend Castle as much as he wants, and more. But I cannot make a decision straight away. There are other people to be consulted. Even then inquiry must be made that your friend is perfectly safe."

I had this passed on to me and made reply.

"I shall want to know all about the bonds," I said. "Unless I am absolutely certain you have them in your possession I will not touch them. I cannot be involved in any robbery that has yet to take place. Nor will I have anything to do with bonds which have been obtained by violence."

The Marquis nodded quite amiably.

"There shall be no cause for complaint," he replied. "It may be that the securities I shall offer you have, shall I say, disappeared from the safes of the Credit Lyonnais and that no one has been killed in the process. But beyond that no questions must be asked. The bonds will be handed over and the money must be paid immediately."

"That will be quite agreeable to me," I said. "You shall have what we English call cash on the nail."

We left it at that, the arrangement being that the Marquis should show me around the sights of Paris and introduce me to one or two of his friends. I tried hard to dodge this ordeal. To move around Paris was to court discovery, least of all to visit the night haunts of Montmartre and sundry other places frequented by my acquaintances of the underworld.

I speedily ascertained something else. I had put up at the Grand Hotel as the place most likely to be patronized by an English visitor, and it did not take long for a little excitement to be added to the battle of wits when I found out that I was being shadowed. When I got into my bedroom late that night my belongings had been ransacked. The *femme de chambre* knew nothing about the matter; the valet professed himself equally ignorant. For the next day or two, therefore, I had to move very warily. I "did" all the stock sights of Paris, kept away from all my customary haunts and, no doubt, played the Englishman to perfection.

In three days' time the Marquis and I met again, with our interpreter still on hand. We were pretty good friends by then, and it was without any undue beating about the bush that he informed me he had

half a million francs' worth of securities to place at my disposal.

"That will suit me admirably," I said. "And the price, my dear Marquis?"

"To you, as it is our first transaction, 150,000 francs."

"That is extremely reasonable. When will these bonds be ready?"

"In two days' time."

"It is probable," I remarked, "that I shall have to go back to London for the money. I did not think it wise to bring a large sum over with me in case anything went wrong. But now I know the person with whom I am dealing everything will be quite all right. I shall cross to London to-night and meet you here in two days."

"Excellent, my friend. So long as we know one another we shall be perfectly safe. And when this first transaction has been completed satisfactorily we shall have many more."

I said under my breath that we probably would, if possibly not altogether of the sort this villainous Marquis imagined. There could be no doubt that his was the master mind behind the many murderous robberies that had been reported to the Sûreté, and I was concentrating all my intelligence on trapping him first and leaving his confederates until we got him safely under lock and key.

But cunning was wanted. There were murderers in league with this sinister scoundrel and I had no fancy to end my life with a knife stuck in my back one dark night. That would surely happen if I arrested him in Paris and it came out, as it unavoidably would do, that I was the detective who had trapped this

king of criminals. I wanted to get him over to England, where I would be able to deal with him in my own way. Time enough for the Marquis and his associates to make the disconcerting discovery that I was an agent of the Sûreté when I had compromised them and established their guilt beyond all shadow of doubt. I am not a coward, but I knew full well the necessity for caution.

They shadowed me to the Gare du Nord and saw me safely on my way to England, little dreaming that I had in my pocket a warrant for the arrest of the Marquis. It was quite a busy time I had after I had put up at the Charing Cross Hotel in London and made my way down Whitehall to Scotland Yard to greet my old friend Chief-Inspector Frank Froest, to whom I explained the situation.

"This sounds pretty good," remarked Froest, rubbing his hands. "But you must be careful. We should not like the honour of sending your dead body back to France."

"You would like it no better than I would myself," I replied. "The Marquis will not be pleased when he finds he is not so clever as he thought."

The plot began to thicken. The day following my visit to Scotland Yard a telegram arrived at the hotel to say that the Marquis was ready to do business. "Come at once," he wired. I wrote back to inform him I was detained in London and could not possibly come to Paris for some weeks and suggested that it would be better for him to see me in London.

Would he fall into the trap I was baiting for him? I wondered. In twenty-four hours I knew. Another message arrived to say he was leaving Paris

immediately by the ten o'clock train and would reach London about six o'clock that night. Now, I thought, I have you, my fine Marquis. He would be bringing the bonds, I knew, and without any waste of time I went off to Scotland Yard again and made the arrangements that were necessary.

But, oh, the cleverness of this man! The moment I received his message I had telegraphed to the Sûreté to have him watched. I wanted to know for certain when he left, and I was not greatly surprised when there came a reply to say that the Marquis had indeed left but by an earlier train.

The reason? Quite a simple one if you are fortunate enough to understand the workings of these international crooks. He had to take a certain amount of risk in coming to England at all with stolen bonds in his possession, but in case a trap was being laid for him he thought to circumvent it by going off earlier than he had notified in his communication to me. Also, he probably imagined he would reach London before he was expected and by judicious questioning at my hotel find out whether I was trying to trap him.

Both of us, no doubt, gave excellent simulations of surprise on Victoria station shortly before six o'clock that evening. I was walking up and down the Continental platform as though waiting for the train when a hand gently pressed my shoulder and my friend the Marquis murmured: "Ah, so you are there, my dear Harry!"

"Why," I exclaimed in great amazement, "how is it you have got here so early? Your train is not in yet."

MARQUIS DE LA HOUPLIERE

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To look at the Marquis you would never have taken him for a dangerous criminal. Dressed in a handsome black travelling coat with an astrachan collar, and wearing a hat that only a French aristocrat could wear, he seemed the embodiment of a distinguished foreigner. We chatted together for a time while he informed me that he had found it convenient to catch an earlier train and that he was already staying at a London hotel.

"And you bring the securities with you?" I inquired in my mixture of broken French and English.

"I have left them at my hotel. What about the money?"

"That," I said, "lies at my office. One cannot carry thousands of pounds about with them."

He was all suspicion, this double-dealing Marquis. I could feel him looking at me out of the corner of his eye wondering, possibly, if he was falling into a trap. But I just stared straight ahead as the taxi-cab sped on its way to the Marquis's hotel in the Strand.

"Tell me why you have not brought the money with you?" he asked harshly. "I am not going to run all over London with you."

I looked offended.

"Surely," I replied, just as angrily, "you do not think I should go to your hotel where someone may be waiting to knock me on the head and take my money from me before I even see the bonds. I am much too old a hand for that. First you will let me see the securities and then, if they fulfil your claims, you shall have the money."

"Bah!" he spat at me, "you do not understand

dealing between gentlemen. You English are a nation of tradesmen. I," and he tugged at his moustaches, "am a man of honour."

I apologized for doubting him and, privately, wondered what he would say when the denouément did come. Conversation grew a little strained and I was nore than a little relieved when we reached his hotel. We went upstairs to his room and without any further ado he pulled out a valise and from it extracted a bundle of bonds six inches thick.

They were stolen, all right! A thrill went down my spine as I looked at the numbers and remembered them as having been stolen from a Paris office. There were others in the packet which had disappeared from a citizen of Meulon, and it was in respect of these bonds that I held a warrant.

"Do they satisfy you?" asked the Marquis with a sneer. I dare say he despised me, as all robbers do the men who buy their plunder. "Is my fine English gentleman certain he is not being swindled?" he added.

"I have to be careful, Marquis," I said. "But since everything seems all fair and above-board we shall go along to my office in Pall Mall where I shall hand you the money."

"Let us go then; I have no time to waste."

Downstairs we went, the Marquis putting the bonds in his overcoat pocket. The only thing that worried me was whether all my plans would work out to calculation. If everything had been carried out there should be a taxicab with a special driver waiting at the hotel door and, more important still, in the vestibule of the hotel a Scotland Yard man to give notice of our coming.

"You will take a drink with me, Marquis?" I asked as we reached the ground floor. I wasn't asking him for hospitable purposes, but he wasn't to know that. He grunted acquiescence, more for the sake of politeness than anything else, and accompanied me to the American Bar.

"Come along," he ordered brusquely. "The sooner we get this business over the better."

He was beginning to smell danger—no doubt about that. But I wanted to get him outside the hotel. The managers of these luxurious establishments don't like criminals being arrested inside their doors and, besides, I could do with a little assistance. As a French police officer I had no right to make an arrest on English soil so, without any further unnecessary parley, I led the way outside.

Everything, apparently, was all ready. A taxicab with the flag down stood waiting and in the offing I could see three English detectives ready to pounce upon our man.

"Engaged?" I asked the driver.

"No, sir."

"Come on," I said to the Marquis, "this will do."

It was the time for action.

"Look out, Marquis," I screamed. "The police are here."

I jumped in the cab and the Marquis like a flash followed me.

"A hundred pounds," I yelled to the driver through the open door, "if you get us away."

But the Marquis, a man of resource if ever there was one, had no intention of taking that remote chance. Like a shot out of a gun he flew out of the door the other side to fall straight into the arms of

two muscular officers who were waiting for him. He fought like a tiger, shouting fiercely at them while they put the handcuffs on him and took him off to another cab waiting hard by.

I disappeared from the scene. As far as the Marquis knew I had also been taken prisoner, but he saw no more of me for a considerable time afterwards. The first part of my work had been done in trapping him ; the second part would be revealed later.

Remarkable events began to take place soon after the Marquis had appeared at Bow Street police court for extradition. We got him back to France, though he never saw me, with the result that he betrayed all his confederates, being of the opinion that they had sold him. That was exactly what we wanted, and when I saw my Chief he was bubbling with satisfaction to think that he had at last laid low such a dangerous gang.

Monsieur le Marquis's gentlemanly instincts went by the board altogether when he appeared before the *juge d'instruction* at Meulon to be interrogated for the robbery there. He put all the blame on Mr. Harry Castle, a notorious English crook, and as it wasn't advisable just then that my identity should be disclosed we allowed the *juge d'instruction* to issue a warrant for my arrest !

The Marquis's examination was likely to take some time. As I have already explained, there were something like thirty robberies to be cleared up, and until all the gang had been arrested my real identity had to be kept dark. I was playing another game in Paris with the Marquis's associates, sympathizing with them over the downfall of their leader and

gradually piecing together the evidence that would put an end to the entire conspiracy.

It was certainly a dangerous game and I never knew from one day to another when I would be found out. The *juge d'instruction* knew little or nothing of what was going on. He solemnly sent on to Paris an order to have me arrested, which was in due course forwarded to Scotland Yard!

I must confess I felt no great surprise on journeying over to London in connection with the case to be informed by Froest that he held a warrant for me!

"You will have to arrest yourself," he said, "and I dare say we can trust you to report yourself in custody to the judge at Meulon."

"I shall do my duty, my dear Froest," I replied.

It was much too good a joke not to be played out to the end. With a solemn face I presented myself to *Monsieur le juge*, handed him my card on which was inscribed:

M. René Cassellari,
Commissaire,
Sûreté Générale, Paris.

"Yes," he said gravely, "you are the officer who has been dealing with the Marquis de la Houpliere?"

"That is so," I replied, "and I also have here," producing it from my pocket, "your warrant for the arrest of the Englishman, Harry Castle."

"And where is he?" asked the judge sharply. "Have you not brought him?"

"Yes, I am Harry Castle!"

The judge stared at me as though I were mad.

"You are what?" he asked dazedly.

"I, of a certainty, am no less a person than Harry Castle."

"How does all this come about?"

I explained; the judge burst into great laughter. "Oh, you clever devil! So that is how you trap our criminals. Castle in England, Cassellari in France. Ha! Ha! Ha! It is the best thing I have heard of for many a long year. What will the Marquis say?"

"We shall see," I said. "It is probable I shall be called a few hard names."

The Marquis came in escorted by gendarmes. He looked rather down in the mouth since I had last seen him, but the moment he caught sight of me he cried out in great excitement: "That is he!" pointing me out so that there should be no mistake. Everybody stared in astonishment.

"That is the man Castle of whom I have spoken," he exclaimed loudly. "He is the one who can tell you I have told the truth."

The Marquis had doubtless undergone a few shocks in the course of his life, but I don't think he had ever enjoyed the equal of the one I administered to him then and there. I did not want to play with him any longer; the judge would not have permitted it. So I walked over to him and with a bow presented him my card.

"You will allow me," I said courteously in the purest French, "to make myself known to you in my true colours for the first time. Here, as you see, is my card, which will enable you to realize that the Sûreté is not half so stupid as you fondly imagine. Castle in England, but Cassellari in *la belle France*. Only a slight difference, it is true, but quite an important one for you, Monsieur le Marquis."

THE FIXING OF CAPTAIN DOYLE

THE FIXING OF CAPTAIN DOYLE

THIS is a story of a cunning international trickster and how he came by his downfall. It happened eighteen years ago, but to this very day I doubt whether Captain Tommy Doyle has heard how he came to be arrested and sentenced to a long term of penal servitude for the trick he so cleverly played on M. Noury, the famous jeweller of the rue Gréneta.

The tale has other points; in fact, I might say it has a peculiarly appropriate flavour at the present time when automatic photo machines are all the rage. There were, of course, no such inventions in existence in the year 1911, to which I am referring, but I dare say a great many of my English readers will recollect the numerous places scattered all over London where you could have taken a sort of cinematograph film of yourself bound in a small book. You took the book in your hand and with your thumb spun the leaves over so rapidly that you got the effect of a moving picture.

There were all kinds of names for these photographs; the ones which were to prove so useful in the unmasking of an audacious swindler went by the name of Biofix. At all events, they certainly "fixed" Captain Tommy Doyle.

But let me begin at the beginning. I have a logical mind, which requires that I should explain preliminarily how it was that M. Noury, who possessed a world-wide reputation in the dealing of rare jewels, succumbed to a ruse that is as old as the hills.

The British public will have forgotten that M. Noury was a most important witness for the prosecution in the trial of Madame Steinheil, twenty years ago. The dramatic circumstances of this astounding case, in which the beautiful Madame Steinheil was accused of murdering both her husband and her mother, Madame Japy, inflamed not only the whole of France, but also the entire world. Throughout my entire career at the Sûreté I can recollect nothing more amazing than the discovery of the two dead bodies, while Madame Steinheil herself was found on her bed, tightly bound with rope, a gag of cotton wool in her mouth, and practically insensible.

On being released, she told a graphic story of having heard in the night mysterious noises which she did not bother to investigate because she and her husband had not been cohabiting for some time. It would not be fair of me to elaborate in any way upon the sensational turn this tragedy took shortly afterwards. In fairness to Madame Steinheil, however, I must state that although she was put on her trial for murder and found guilty, her case was subsequently reviewed by the Government and her immediate release ordered. Evidence which had not been available at the Seine Assizes proved beyond all shadow of doubt that she could not possibly have been responsible for these dreadful crimes.

I will go so far as to say, however, that to a certain extent she had herself to blame for the suspicion that fastened upon her, which brings in M. Noury and is really the reason why I have mentioned the affair at all.

When the officers of the Sûreté were interrogating Madame Steinheil, she stated that she had been

robbed of her jewels by the men who had bound and gagged her. It was certainly rather a shock when M. Noury came forward to inform the police that *Madame Steinheil had sold him her jewellery a few days before the crimes took place.* M. Noury's evidence was so important that for many months subsequently he was surrounded by a halo of notoriety that caused a vast amount of annoyance to a man of his quiet disposition. But I must get on with the lighter episode of the engaging Captain Doyle.

One fine morning, when M. Noury arrived at his office in the rue Gréneta—he was more or less a wholesale dealer and had no shop—he found in his post a letter from England written on crested note-paper :

"My dear M. Noury,

My friend Lady Helen Grosvenor tells me that you frequently supply her with jewellery. I know that you do not usually deal with private customers, but Lady Helen Grosvenor speaks so highly of you that I am going to ask you the favour of sending me over half a dozen marquise rings in diamonds and emeralds. I want to make a present to a dear friend who is being married shortly and, naturally, I want something nice. Everything in London is so frightfully dear and, besides, the jewellers here have nothing to compare with Paris. Please send the rings as soon as possible. I will select the one I want and send you a cheque by return of post.

Yours very truly,
Agatha Doyle.

P.S. My address is as follows:

Lady Agatha Doyle,
382, Eaton Square,
London, S.W."

Well, it sounded all right. Was not Lady Helen Grosvenor one of M. Noury's most profitable customers, and also closely related to one of the great ducal families of England? Of course, I know that sophisticated people will turn up their noses and ask why a jeweller should be caught by such an obvious trick. But they will be talking arrant nonsense, because all tradesmen, and especially jewellers, are defrauded in this manner. But apart from that, it is the way they do their business. The wealthy, influential folk of the world don't call upon their tradesmen—even the jewellers; nine times out of ten the diamond and pearl dealers are only too glad to call upon them.

So, without bothering to make the inquiries which he undoubtedly should have made, M. Noury put into a box and dispatched by registered post six very nice marquise rings worth close on £1,000. He felt no qualms about the matter. Why should he, a man who frequently walked about the streets of Paris with £100,000 worth of diamonds in his pocket? Besides, he had known Lady Grosvenor for many years, and obviously she must have mentioned to her friend Lady Doyle that she was in the habit of dealing with him.

He gave no further thought to the matter, until a week later five of the rings came back and with them a cheque for £200. Lady Doyle thanked him warmly and hoped to have further transactions with him in the future.

A few weeks passed by and there came another letter from Lady Doyle, this time requesting that M. Noury would send over a few choice diamond pendants, about £250 apiece. If Lady Helen Grosvenor had chanced to walk into M. Noury's office there might have been a different tale to tell. But, as it happened, she didn't, nor did she have any transactions with the excellent jeweller just about that time. It will be sufficient for me to say that the pendants went to London, came back minus one of their number, with a perfectly good cheque to explain the difference. Such deals, if small, had the inestimable virtue of being for prompt cash, which in M. Noury's trade means a lot.

A month went on its way and then M. Noury received quite a long letter from Lady Doyle. Chattily, as one addressing an old friend, she informed him that her only daughter was to be married in a few weeks time. In honour of the occasion, she intended to give the girl a choice collection of jewellery as a wedding present. Her ladyship then set out what she wanted, a pearl necklace or two, some bracelets and bangles, a few brooches, half a dozen rings, diamond hair ornaments and, generally speaking, jewels that would enhance the beauty of one of the prettiest debutantes of the season.

"This," said M. Noury to his son, passing over the letter, "sounds more in our line. I must see what I can do for her ladyship. There should be a nice little profit for us this time."

"Had you not better be careful, father?" replied the younger Noury. "We do not know this lady very well."

"Pah! Is she not the friend of Lady Grosvenor?"

"That does not say that Lady Grosvenor will pay us if Lady Doyle should not."

"*Mon Dieu!*" exclaimed the old man. "When will I ever succeed in teaching you your business?" He threw up his hands in despair and walked out of his office to see about fulfilling Lady Doyle's requirements.

It took him a couple of days to obtain the goods he wanted, but they were certainly worth the trouble when he laid them out on his desk and surveyed them prior to packing them up and posting them to England. Apart from that, they represented a more than useful little sum of money; something like £25,000 was the value he put upon them. The son moodily looked on.

"It is all wrong," he grumbled. "It is not as though we were sending these things to a firm of London jewellers, or even to a lady we know. We have never even seen this Lady Doyle."

"Get about your business," retorted his father shortly. "Am I not tired of listening to you?"

He packed up the jewels with his own hands, took them down to the post office himself, and returned to his office. But as he was walking back it occurred to him that he *had* done a rather foolish thing in entrusting £25,000 worth of jewellery to a perfect stranger. If it had been humanly possible, he would have gone back to the post office and reclaimed the parcel. But he knew the authorities would make a lot of trouble about that and so, dispossessing himself as best he could of the demon of doubt that had begun to take possession of him, he busied himself about other matters.

But the younger Noury uncompromisingly declined to give him any peace.

"Do you not think," he said to his father, "if this Lady Doyle is all you believe her to be, that it would have been more fitting of you to have taken over the jewels yourself? After all, it is not every day that even we receive such a large order. It would have been much more satisfactory to have gone yourself."

That, helped by the grave misgivings that were already afflicting poor M. Noury, put an altogether different complexion on the affair.

"You are right," he said to the son. "I should have gone myself. But there is plenty of time. I can catch the four o'clock train from the Gare du Nord this afternoon. I shall be in London by midnight and can call at Lady Doyle's house first thing in the morning almost as soon as the jewels arrive."

One may safely prophesy that there was no more dumbfounded person in the world than the unfortunate Noury when he drove up to 382 Eaton Square at 10 o'clock the following morning. The trip across the Channel had been a pretty uncomfortable one. With a mind obsessed by the possibility of losing £25,000, he had been in a fever of impatience ever since the train pulled out of Paris. If he had thought of it, he could have telegraphed to Scotland Yard for some information concerning Lady Doyle. But all the time he was pooh-poohing his own suspicions.

As his taxicab drove into Eaton Square the doubts began to vanish. He saw the numerous fine houses, quite obviously occupied by nobody but wealthy people, and remarked to himself what a fool his son was.

But, strange to say, the taxi-man could not find No. 382. He drove all round the Square and then stopped his cab to ask M. Noury if he knew where

the house was. The jeweller did not and a policeman had to be requisitioned.

"Number 382?" echoed the man in blue. "Why, that's in the mews around the corner." He pointed in the direction and M. Noury, who did not know what mews were, got into the cab again feeling much easier in his mind.

Tiens! What could this be? Rows upon rows of stables—or were they garages?—with rooms above. Surely no lady of title would live in such a place. The taxi-man found No. 382 and M. Noury got out. He asked a man who looked like an ostler if he knew where Lady Doyle was to be found.

The ostler gazed at him in pitying amazement.

"Lady Doyle!" he said with a guffaw. "There ain't no such person 'ere. We 'ad a Captain Doyle livin' in them two rooms upstairs. But whether you'll find 'im in is more than I can say."

Captain Doyle was not in. The rooms above were locked and the only information M. Noury could receive was that the Captain had gone out that morning after receiving a small parcel from the postman. The jeweller almost fainted when he heard the news, especially when the interested crowd of onlookers added that the Captain had been accompanied by his luggage.

He at once reported the fraud to Scotland Yard and a warrant was issued for the arrest of Captain Doyle. The distracted Noury returned to Paris, gathered all the papers he had relating to Lady Doyle, and brought them along to the Sûreté.

It was one of those cases requiring the services of an English-speaking officer. As most of these jobs were handed to me, my chief sent M. Noury to my

room, where he unfolded his tale of woe. The only clue in his possession worth anything was that of the cheque. It is always possible to trace the issue of a cheque-book.

I comforted M. Noury as best I could and immediately set to work. In Paris I obtained particulars of the London bank through which the cheques had been paid and that same night crossed over to pursue my investigations in London.

"Lady Doyle" had been rather careless; the cheques with which she had paid M. Noury had originally been issued to a limited liability company with offices in Regent Street, London. I joined forces with Scotland Yard and made a call at the address. But, alas, it was one of those derelict businesses which so frequently exist in big cities. Only one man was to be found there, and that was not Captain Doyle. From what we could gather, the gallant captain had launched out apparently for the purpose of catching a few confiding investors. When things became too hot for him he cleared out with the company's cheque-book leaving behind dozens of people to mourn his absence.

A visit to Somerset House proved a little more useful. There was a list of shareholders in existence, obviously dummies, but possibly of assistance to us. I made a note of the addresses, called upon them one by one, until eventually I fastened upon a gentleman by the name of Montgomery Callow, with offices in Fleet Street, as the person who probably knew where the elusive Captain Doyle was to be found.

Mr. Callow was a stout little man bubbling over with suspicion; his responses to my amiable inquiries about my dear friend Captain Doyle were frigid

in the extreme. I told him I was one of the "Boys", but he didn't seem to believe me. Mr. Callow, however, possessed quite a pretty little secretary, who seemed more than a little interested in my visit. When I brought her into the conversation she informed me that she knew Captain Doyle very well, this despite a grimace on the part of her employer obviously warning her to keep silent.

Quite a piquant comedy began to develop. The young lady, who frankly told me her name was Stella Dobbs, didn't seem to have much affection—or respect—for her employer. Probably she knew too much about him.

"Will you not come to lunch with me?" I asked. "I have just arrived in London and it is rather lonely by myself."

Mr. Callow looked as black as thunder, but Stella and I chatted on. Maybe she thought a Frenchman a bit of a change, but she certainly blithely accepted my invitation and told me that she hadn't had a really decent lunch since Captain Doyle went away. Mr. Callow registered profound disapproval. Unfortunately, I couldn't very well leave him out of the luncheon-party. The three of us went off to the Savoy together, where I found a table for three in the grill room and set out to pump her dry.

It wasn't a very comfortable little party. Mr. Callow's appetite suffered a little in trying to stifle the indiscretions that his fair secretary poured forth. She and the Captain, I gathered, had been more than a trifle friendly. But there had been a soupçon of jealousy in their association. The Captain had another sweetheart, a girl far removed from Stella's station of life.

"You wouldn't have thought," remarked Stella through a mouthful of chicken, "that a man like Tommy Doyle would have picked up with a lady's maid."

I expressed the gravest disbelief and waited for more.

"Yes," she went on, "fancy him picking up with Lady Grosvenor's maid!"

I heard a choking noise from Mr. Callow, who seemed on the verge of apoplexy, but I paid no heed and let the lady prattle on.

"We used to have some fine times together, but I could never stand that girl. The airs she used to give herself! And you'd have thought she owned Tommy. Once we went to the Biofix shop along the Strand and had our photos taken together. My, didn't she carry on about that!"

Mr. Callow's emotions became too much for him. Hurriedly wiping his mouth with his serviette, he got up saying that he had an important appointment at his office and must leave us forthwith. He didn't even bother to thank me for entertaining him.

I thought it high time to tell Stella the truth.

"Now, look here, my dear," I said quietly, "your friend Captain Doyle is a dangerous swindler and for all I know he may have involved you. He has been using Lady Grosvenor's maid for the purpose of robbing a Paris jeweller. The best thing you can do is to tell me everything you know."

Stella's eyes filled with fright. She demanded to know who I really was. When I informed her that I was a detective officer of the Sûreté specially sent over from Paris to trace Captain Doyle she almost collapsed. But she didn't know what had become of him.

I took her to the Biofix shop so that we might find Captain Doyle's photograph. Once I could get that circulated I would soon run him down. But the manager proved obstreperous; not until I produced my official card and murmured something about procuring the assistance of Scotland Yard would he consent to allow us to look through the pictures that had been taken about the time Stella remembered.

We spent a peculiar and busy afternoon, Stella and I, closely examining thousands of little books of photographs for the missing Captain, but we got him at last, a bald-headed gentleman whose smiling physiognomy as caught by the camera flickered through our fingers.

"That will do very nicely," I said to my companion. "If one or another of these pictures doesn't catch him my name isn't Cassellari."

The unsuspecting Captain had probably forgotten all about the Biofix when he stepped off a Union Castle boat at Cape Town a couple of months later with a nice wad of bank-notes in his possession. Someone stopped him as he was coming down the gangway and asked him if he was Captain Doyle.

"Not it," replied the Captain boldly. "My name's Daniels."

"It might be now," said his interrogator, while another man closed in behind him, "but not so long ago it was Doyle. You're wanted."

They took the Captain to the police-station and showed him his photograph.

"Well, I'll be damned!" he exclaimed.

SECRETS OF
THE WHITE SLAVE TRAFFIC

SECRETS OF THE WHITE SLAVE TRAFFIC

WHAT am I to say about that horrible business, the White Slave Traffic? For more years than I can remember, Paris has been the happy hunting-ground of those loathsome creatures who regularly scour the capitals of Europe for beautiful young women who may be enticed into leading a life of shame in some country far away from their native land, and I will make bold to say that the evil still continues, though it has abated a great deal since the Argentine Republic fell into line with the other nations of the world and made some definite effort to check what was undoubtedly a foul stain on its good name.

It would be wrong of me, however, to place all the blame on South American countries. Some little time prior to the War, I was in charge of a special department for the suppression of the White Slave Traffic, and narcotics such as cocaine, morphia, etc., and in that capacity had an office in the Ministry of the Interior. Daily I was occupied with heart-broken mothers and fathers whose daughters had disappeared they knew not where.

Frequently, also, there would come pretty little girls to tell me of men who had taken them out and entertained them and then painted alluring pictures of the happy life they would lead and the money they would make if they would only go abroad.

Russia was another profitable venue for the White Slave agent. In the days when the drunken Cossack was in his element and rich Russians were a good deal

more plentiful than they are now, it was no uncommon story to hear of half a dozen girls being enticed to Moscow or St. Petersburg on the pretext that they were to be employed as dressmakers or milliners, only to find on arrival that they were locked up in a place that was nothing more than a fashionable house of assignation, where they were starved and beaten until they consented to sell themselves to the young aristocrats and officers who patronized the establishment.

I have heard the most terrible stories from girls I have succeeded in getting back, of madly-intoxicated men temporarily insane with vodka, who burst into their apartments firing pistols at the mirrors and wounding with their swords anyone who ventured to expostulate with them.

But South America was easily the worst. In the principal cities of countries like the Argentine, Brazil, and even in Uruguay, there was a lucrative trade to be done in the bodies of attractive girls. Bogus music-hall agents, dressmakers, milliners, storekeepers, with ramifications extending all over Europe, were continually on the watch for the poor, credulous little creatures who vainly hankered for a life of luxury. What was easier than to whisper to them, after a dinner and wine the like of which they had never known before, that such an existence was an everyday affair in the languorous capitals of South America, where all men were millionaires and the climate was eternal sunshine ?

Shall I ever forget that poignant little drama in which I was fortunate enough to play an important part and, incidentally, save a vain, empty-headed, but pretty child from the horrors of going to the

Argentine, where she would have found herself trapped for evermore by White Slavers to whom she was nothing but so much flesh-and-blood, worth so much as long as her charms lasted—and then a lonely death amid strangers?

It was while I was temporarily in charge of the frontier police at Boulogne-sur-Mer, for you must know that there are always officers of the Sûreté at such places, closely watching the boats to and from England for the criminals who are seeking their prey. Great liners also call at Boulogne, and it was in connection with a German ship bound for South America that this story is told.

In a state of frantic agitation there came rushing into my office one day a man who gasped out that he had just discovered that his only daughter had struck up a friendship with a man who was known to be a White Slave agent and that she had gone aboard the German ship *en route* to the Argentine. The man was with her; and the father, his face working with fear, implored me to use all the means in my power to get her back.

I hurriedly made inquiries and was informed by the agents that the liner had already left. It was before the days of wireless telegraphy becoming general, but suddenly, while racking my brain for ways and means of helping the distracted parent, I bethought myself of a warship that was even then lying in Boulogne harbour. Better still, she was an Argentine man-o'war, the *Presidente Sarmento*, and although I did not know the captain I felt certain that he would assist me by permitting me to use the wireless installation he carried.

The father rushed off to the waterside and there,

to our great astonishment, we found the *Presidente Sarmento* a blaze of light. A gendarme patrolling the wharf informed us that the Captain was giving a ball to the civilian notables of Boulogne, but without any waste of time I ordered the police-boat to take me aboard the warship.

I explained my errand to the officer who greeted me at the gangway, and although he was rather dubious as to how I would be received, I insisted on being taken to the captain's quarters. There I told the commander what had happened and begged him, if only for the sake of the father who anxiously stood looking on, that he would send to the German liner a description of the missing girl and also of the man who accompanied her.

"If it were not the fact that I have guests on board," said the Captain, a fine stamp of a man, when I had told him all, "I would myself pursue this vessel. Your wireless message you certainly shall have at once." He pressed a bell, gave a rapid order in Spanish to the officer who answered it, and asked me to wait for a reply.

An hour or so went by with the German commander apparently unable to identify the people we wanted. Not that I expected otherwise, for on their first day out from port travellers usually take to their beds. I had no option but to make my way ashore again, the Captain of the *Presidente Sarmento* promising me that he would send a message the moment he received any news.

All night long I remained in my office with the poor father wringing his hands in agony. It must have been well after midnight when there came an imperious rapping at my door, and on opening it I

found there a French pilot who breathlessly informed us that the German liner, having received the warship's message, had steamed all the way back to Boulogne to comply with the French maritime laws that prohibited the carrying of White Slavers and their victims.

I was fearful that serious trouble might arise from such an extraordinary occurrence, for never before in the history of France had a foreign liner been called back by a mere police officer. Before complying with the pilot's request that I should immediately interview the Captain of the vessel, I thought it expedient to disturb the German consul in Boulogne and relate to him exactly what had taken place.

"You have done quite right, my friend," said the Consul, a very amiable German by the name of Busch. "What is a few hours to a ship beside the life of this unfortunate girl? I myself will accompany you aboard and smooth matters over for you."

Nor, to my great surprise, was the German captain at all annoyed. A great, burly man with a long beard, he swore by all his gods that he had daughters of his own and would sooner have seen his ship sink under him than carry to a brothel in Buenos Aires an innocent girl.

"I have your man safely under lock and key," he added with intense satisfaction. "He has not had a happy time in the six hours that we have been returning. His face is not quite so beautiful as it was, but you will not mind that. The girl is in her cabin and you, M'sieu," turning to the father, "had better take her home and see that she does not again listen to the tales of smooth scoundrels." The captain

was inclined to be rather rude to the father and so, after a bottle of wine to celebrate the occasion, I took my White Slaver off, while the girl and her repentant parent hurriedly made for home. The great liner whistled us her farewell, gathered up speed, and sped away into the darkness. Almost alongside her lay the *Presidente Sarmento*, a mass of light and music. The dancers merrily footed it while the drama was going on, unconscious that overhead throughout the night the ship's wireless was sending forth messages that were to mean the salvation of a young girl's life.

It was in consequence of the revelations that I dragged out of my White Slaver while I had him in my custody that I was able to unearth a gigantic conspiracy which aimed at shipping to South America not one, nor even a dozen, girls, but hundreds of them. Some mysterious international crook whom we were never able to lay hands on had formulated a plan for enticing out-of-work girls by the hundred and sending them off to places like Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, Monte Video and other large places where they might proceed without question.

On the face of it, nobody could object. There was an agency in Paris which ostensibly had work to offer these "midinettes". Their passage was to be paid, and they were provided before going with an expensive outfit much too good for their station in life. Before they actually embarked, they were sent to houses in the suburbs, where they made the acquaintance of the men who were to escort them abroad, or, occasionally, a lady who was called a "matron".

But how mysterious were these houses! The girls

were practically prisoners, being forbidden to write to their relatives, or even to go out alone. Certainly they were taken out for a drive, but always under escort. They were trapped, although, naturally, they did not know it. It was not until they arrived at their destination, curious no doubt, as to what they were to do, that they received the first intimation of the terrible life that lay before them.

Cunning was not the word. The White Slavers, most of them international Jews, required no telling that the boat-trains out of Paris were being closely watched by men of the Sûreté for the slightest sign of a girl being in charge of a procurer. But to obviate this danger they had adopted a ruse which remained a secret until I got *my* White Slaver in a cell at Boulogne and proceeded, without any due regard for his feelings, the extract the full story of the plot.

The houses to which the girls were being sent were invariably just outside Paris and always on the main railway lines to Havre, Boulogne and Cherbourg, the ports from which the big liners sailed to South American ports. No fast trains, of course, stopped at such places, which was exactly what the White Slavers wanted. The expresses were subjected on their arrival to the closest possible scrutiny, but naturally nobody took the slightest notice of the slow trains that went dawdling down the line until they arrived at their destinations at all hours of the day and night. It was natural for servant girls to travel by such methods and so, for quite a long time, dozens upon dozens of them travelled to South America to undergo a fate which it is better should not be described.

Shortly after the capture of the man at Boulogne

we raided a big house at Sartrouville, near Paris, and found it to be fitted up like an hotel, lavishly bedecked with mirrors, bathrooms, and bedrooms strangely out of keeping with its external appearance. There were just a few girls at the place and, unfortunately, we were unsuccessful in catching any of the men who were the real organizers of the establishment. They, in company with the "matron", must have received a whisper of what was coming and they were never heard of again. There were stacks of false passports hidden in a desk, proving beyond all doubt that a regular business had been at work, but the utmost we could do for the time being was to fully expose the foul business in the Press as a warning to girls not to be entertained or even spoken to by plausible scoundrels who, alas, are much too numerous in Paris.

But for one gang that we broke up, there were half a dozen more that went undiscovered. One must appreciate the difficulties. Two or three girls, accompanied perhaps by an elderly woman, would get off a slow night train arriving at say, Cherbourg, in the early hours of the morning. It was, naturally, no business of anybody what they were doing. They all had their passports, forged, of course, although no one was to know that, because the fabrication of these things is a regular business in the realms of international crime. But armed with these, and with their tickets for South America, it was the easiest thing in the world for them to proceed aboard a steamer shortly sailing for a South American port making, perhaps, the excuse that they were bad sailors and wanted to make themselves comfortable before the vessel cast off.

In many cases the girls were under age, and in such instances it was possible to detain them legally and, eventually, reveal to them what actually awaited them. But at the best of times it was a thankless task for, as may be imagined, they were foolish girls anxious only to enjoy themselves.

Argentine is, or was, the paradise of the White Slaver, and I have no doubt that the police in that country used the most energetic endeavours to check this traffic in human souls. But for many, many years hundreds of French girls found their way into houses of ill-fame in Buenos Aires to discover that prostitution and procuring was one of the flourishing industries of the city. I have had through my hands girls who have told me strange stories of the constant police supervision that was exercised upon them and also upon the so-called man who acted as the major-domo of the establishment.

Everybody in such places was registered, man and all. In the event of any trouble taking place, the police came down on the man and prosecuted him in much the same way that the licensee of a public-house would be held responsible for a disturbance on his premises.

In Paris itself, the recruiting ground for this disgraceful business, there is no *homme du milieu* who has not been to Buenos Aires, and I am not indulging in the slightest exaggeration that there are hundreds of these *souteneurs* living an idle, luxurious life on money sent to them through a bank by some unfortunate woman in Buenos Aires.

Gradually, as we unearthed the full details of the trade, we found out that there was a regular code in existence between the people in the Argentine and

the agents in Paris. Apparently meaningless telegrams were worded something like this:

> "Send parcel if possible fifteen pounds anyhow under weight, black, cable date delivery and designation goods—Jose."

The real purport of this message was as follows:

> "Send girl fifteen anyhow under age, dark, cable arrival and name under which she will travel with false papers."

Fortunately, the Post Office now closely watches such communications, and the moment they are received the Sûreté is notified and at once investigates the history of the person to whom they are addressed. More important is the concerted action which is taken by the great European nations and the heavy punishment which is meted out to the offenders. The strict regulations governing the employment of music-hall artists, principally dancers, in foreign countries, has also severely checked the activities of the White Slave agents. At one time it was the easiest thing in the world to engage a troupe of girls to go abroad and there, without any unnecessary prevarication, compel them, under fear of starvation, to lead a life of shame.

No words of mine can be strong enough to castigate the officials of a country who not only wink at the importations of young girls for immoral purposes, but also receive bribes for permitting it. Such a state of affairs was common enough in South America up to a few years ago; it was quite an ordinary

occurrence to see a steamer leaving Cherbourg or Bordeaux with a dozen girls bound for a life that was little better than a living death. Still, the countries so concerned have now plainly had it made known to them that they cannot participate in civilized councils unless they are prepared to put a stop to a trade that was a blot upon their names.

The traffic will never be suppressed altogether. The *homme du milieu* is well rewarded if he is successful in finding suitable girls. It is just a matter of catching him ; if he falls into the arms of the law and gets the flogging and a long term of imprisonment that is his due, he rapidly comes to the conclusion that the sale of a woman's body is not a transaction to be undertaken by such as he.

THE STORY OF A SPY

THE STORY OF A SPY

YOU will never realize, my English friends, because you have never properly experienced it, the irritation that is caused by the knowledge that you are continually being spied upon by your enemies. I know, of course, that the war of the secret services is always going on, but you have never suffered from the machinations of spies as we have suffered in France for more years than I can remember.

You are fortunate enough to live in a tight little island where it is possible for you to keep a close watch on the comings and goings of suspicious strangers. But with us in France it was always different; enemy agents could cross frontiers and make their way into our country undiscovered until such time as they betrayed themselves or were denounced by the master spies who employed them.

It is perhaps unnecessary for me to remark that the deadliest of all the secret services that plotted against us was that of Germany, and I will go so far as to say that the Germans directly aggravated the probabilities of war between their country and ours by the flagrant manner in which they flooded France with their agents.

The story I have to tell you concerns the career of a very daring German spy who went by the name of Otto Krempp. It was in 1908, quite a long time before there broke out the Great War which was to bring everlasting desolation and devastation to the

world. In that year information came to the Sûreté that an agent of the German Secret Service, who spoke French fluently with little or no accent, had been operating in the district of Bourbonne-les-Bains, one of those spas possessing a considerable reputation for the cure of rheumatism and such-like complaints.

A strange place, you will think, for a spy to cast his net, but not quite so inexplicable when you realize that the thermal establishment of the town was greatly favoured by military officers. There were always to be found a number of them taking the cure, and it appeared, from the story that was told us, that this spy, dressed in a French military uniform, had stayed at Bourbonne-les-Bains and naturally made the acquaintance of the officers he found there. He wore the uniform of an artillery lieutenant and said that he was attached to one of the frontier staffs.

One will readily admit his cleverness, for in France, where there has been bitterness against the Germans for fully sixty years, it would be altogether impossible for a Teuton to openly proclaim his nationality without immediately precipitating trouble.

But this mysterious lieutenant had an ingratiating way with him and, as I have already explained, spoke the French language without the slightest flaw. In a short space of time he had become friendly with a captain, who confided to him that one of his brother officers now held an important post as a tutor at the Ecole de Guerre (Military Academy) in Paris. It did not take this cunning spy long to realize that here was a grand opportunity. Without any great difficulty he purloined some letters belonging to his

friend the captain and then, probably, returned to Germany to carry out the plan in mind.

It will give you some idea of the vast sums of money the German Secret Service was prepared to pay for valuable confidential intelligence when I say that this spy probably spent the better part of twelve months learning to imitate the captain's handwriting! It was certainly not until next year that he was seen again at Bourbonne-les-Bains, still in the uniform of the artillery. But this time he was under another name, that of the captain's. At another hotel, under this officer's name, he booked a room and immediately set about putting his plans into action.

In a forged handwriting, which completely escaped detection, he wrote to the tutor at the Ecole de Guerre to say that he would be at Bourbonne-les-Bains for some weeks and would be glad to occupy his time by a study of the artillery secret handbooks. The letter was so convincing that the tutor sent the books without question. Not the slightest suspicion of anything being wrong crossed his mind until he tried to get the books back. Then, to his intense dismay, his letters to his friend in Bourbonne-les-Bains remained unanswered. An inquiry was immediately set on foot, when it speedily became evident that the unfortunate Captain X had been the victim of a clever German spy.

Worse still, there were other vitally important secret books at large. When Captain X revealed everything, he also admitted having sent to Bourbonne-les-Bains another parcel of books even more valuable to an enemy country. They dealt with fortifications in time of war, and set out in a most explicit fashion the procedure that was to be followed by France's

artillery and engineer officers. There was consternation at the Ministry of War; post-haste I received instructions to hurry off to Bourbonne-les-Bains and see if I could not capture this cunning agent of what we guessed to be the German Secret Service.

I carried with me an album which contained the photographs of the many men and women who were known to be German agents, and when I arrived at Bourbonne-les-Bains I at once interviewed the proprietor of the Hotel du Commerce where the spy had posed as Captain C—. But, alas, the bird had vacated its nest. *Monsieur le patronne,* trembling with trepidation, informed me with many apologies that the person whose photograph in the album he recognized had indeed stayed there previously in the uniform of a French captain, and that he expected him again shortly. But the room he had booked had been cancelled; instead, there had come from Carlsruhe a letter saying that he, Captain C——, was in bed with rheumatism and could not possibly make the journey. But would the proprietor be good enough to forward any parcels that came for him by the next mail?

"Where is the parcel?" I demanded. "I hope you have not sent it."

The unfortunate hotelier was in a bad state of funk, probably of the opinion that serious trouble was awaiting him. His good lady, who had joined us, hurriedly produced a parcel from a safe and handed it over. I opened it immediately and found it to contain half a dozen books for which, I have no doubt, the German High Command would cheerfully have paid £10,000.

"Now," I said sternly, with the full intention of

frightening the life out of the couple, "you have already done sufficient mischief permitting an enemy agent to stay in your hotel. Are you so infernally stupid that you do not know a German from your own people? This man whose photograph I have shown you is a German born and bred. His name is Otto Krempp and he is a dangerous spy."

They gazed at me in dismay, shaking all over.

"What can we do, M'sieu, to right this wrong?" asked the man.

"I will tell you that later. All that you are to do at present is to remain silent. If either of you so much as utters a word about what has taken place, I shall put you under arrest at once. It is almost certain that Krempp has someone watching this hotel. Get me your register of guests."

It would have been a nice prize for the German Secret Service, this parcel of books which set out in full detail France's plans for fortifying her frontier when war came. I had never seen such books myself, but I could well understand what a munificent reward would await the man who could bring them to the Wilhelmstrasse. They were marked "Secret and Confidential", as well they might be.

But how to catch this cunning spy? He could not be arrested outside France and the only thing I could do was to lay a trap for him in the hope that he thought himself unsuspected.

In the privacy of his office, I dictated to the now thoroughly repentant landlord a letter to Herr Krempp:

I have received M. le Capitan's letter asking me that his room shall be cancelled and that

> I shall forward to him any parcel that may arrive. But perhaps M. le Capitan will be well enough to travel in the course of a week or so, and that being the case it will be better that I should keep for him any letters and parcels that may arrive. I can assure monsieur that he shall receive a warm welcome.

The latter part of the letter was more than true. There was waiting for Herr Otto Krempp alias *M. le capitan* a welcome that would have been warm to the verge of sultriness. The arrangement was that a party of us from the Sûreté were to be waiting in the drawing-room when he arrived. We had even furnished the proprietor with a password to indicate that he had the man we wanted. When we heard him invite someone to "walk in" we were to seize the person and hold him as a German spy, that is, provided he fell into the trap.

We hardly thought he would, but to our intense surprise there came a telegram from Krempp to say that he would be arriving at Bourbonne-les-Bains on Friday afternoon. It was then Wednesday, and for two whole days we went about congratulating ourselves that we were about to have the kudos of capturing one of the most dangerous spies in France.

Friday afternoon came. Three of us ensconced ourselves in the drawing-room reading newspapers, securely hidden from the vision of anyone coming in. Half an hour went by, with all three of us excitedly waiting for the climax. Suddenly we heard a voice outside the door: "Will Monsieur please walk in?"

We sprang to our feet. There burst into the room a pompous, self-important little man with Frenchman

ANOTHER PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR

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written all over him. The three of us made a rush and seized him. He struggled like a wild cat and fiercely demanded to know the reason of this outrage.

"Outrage?" I exclaimed. "You are the man we have been waiting for."

"I am what?"

"Otto Krempp, German spy," I replied.

"Bah! you are a fool," shrieked the little man. "Do you not know who I am? I am Monsieur Verney, the Assistant Divisional Commissary Chief of the Mobile Brigade of Dijon," rolling off his titles with truculent fierceness.

Who could deny it? At this stage of the proceedings the poor landlord came in and amply corroborated our misgivings. The Commissary had been in Bourbonne-les-Bains investigating a robbery, and hearing from the local police—confidentially, of course—that important police officers from Paris were in the town at the Hotel du Commerce, he thought it no more than his due that he should come along and be taken into consultation.

"I could not help it, Monsieur," cried the unfortunate proprietor. "He was in the hall shouting out that he was the Commissary of Police of the Province and would place me under arrest if I denied him admission. What was I to do?"

What were we to do? That was more to the point. Krempp never arrived that afternoon nor, in fact, had I ever really expected him to do so. But I had no doubt at all that some confederate had been waiting in the hall to see if there was a trap.

"This is a nice thing you have done," I said to the Commissary. "Do you know that we were here to

catch a German spy and that you have probably ruined everything by your foolishness ?"

The little man struck another attitude. Being entirely unabashed, he again asked me if I knew who he was.

"I know what you are, all right," I informed him, "and that, is a first-class idiot. If you were in Paris, you would not be Commissary of Police long."

We remained at Bourbonne-les-Bains for another three or four days, but Krempp never turned up. Such a cunning spy would never have walked into a trap so simply, and I returned to Paris taking with me the books that had so nearly gone astray. A letter was sent to the Commissary of Dijon castigating him soundly for his unutterable foolishness, but that, of course, helped us not the slightest in catching Otto Krempp.

We heard of him all over France posing as a Captain, but the probabilities are that very little success came his way because of the warning that was circulated. One must give the man his due and readily admit his courage. Adding another stripe to his uniform, he became a major on leave from Africa, anxious to make himself fully up to date on all the latest and most secret methods of warfare.

Then we heard of him as a commercial traveller, making friends everywhere he went with non-commissioned officers and private soldiers. He was certainly a man of parts, this Otto Krempp, well-educated, a master of languages, and able to move in any class of society. He would pick up with soldiers in music-halls, telling them that he was at a loose end in the evening and liked to be in the company of military men. Did he not feel sorry, having experienced it

himself, for the wretchedness of their lot and the poorness of their pay? Ten francs and a few drinks went a long way with a soldier anxious for the company of a woman. In a few days, the acquaintance having developed, this generous commercial traveller would have lent many small sums, and as he did so, dexterously and casually as befitted a spy of international reputation, pumped the borrowers on matters of minor importance.

The loans would go on and the questioning would go on. Then there would come a time when the sum owing had assumed the formidable dimension of a hundred francs, and Krempp's questions would begin to grow rather more confidential.

It took us a very long time to get down to the bottom of the damage he did. Occasionally soldiers complained to their Commanding Officer, but by the time anything had been done the German had disappeared. The greatest coup that came his way was the robbery of an entirely new pattern of machine-gun from some barracks near the Eastern frontier. There was collusion, of course, but we never succeeded in discovering the soldiers who had been victimized by this super-spy of the German Secret Service. Krempp had been in the neighbourhood for something like six weeks, spending his money like a millionaire under the pretence that he was about to start a café. Instead, he escaped into Germany with a machine-gun and thus brought about a drastic alteration in the armament of the troops.

It requires an ultra-clever man to continue the

profession of spy for many years without being detected or, worse still, being betrayed by the very people who employ him.

One may think it strange indeed that such a fate should overtake anyone who undertakes the dangerous task of penetrating a foreign country in search of information, but I can say without fear of contradiction that it is so. A man may get to know too much ; the time may come when he grows not only arrogant, but also exceedingly expensive. Then, secretly, he is denounced, and the tortuous fields of espionage know him as a worker no more.

I am sure none of you will guess how Otto Krempp concluded his labours in the Secret Service. What would you say if I told you that in the early part of 1914, shortly before the great World War had descended upon Europe, the Germans betrayed the man who had done such valuable work for them ?

Someone wrote a letter to the Sûreté informing us that Krempp was in Paris as an agent of the German Secret Service, and it devolved upon me to arrest him. He did not complain, nor did he deny being a spy. In fact, he candidly admitted having come to our country to try and obtain the plans of our new "75" gun, the weapon that subsequently wreaked such tremendous damage on the battlefield.

In the ordinary course of events Krempp would have been put on his trial, convicted, and sentenced to a long term of imprisonment in a fortress. But suddenly a great thought struck me. Such a man, I concluded, would naturally feel terribly vindictive towards the people who had so callously betrayed him. Why not make use of him ? Get him to tel us all he knows of the German spies at present in

France and, better still, let him send to Germany the plans they were seeking.

The *agent double* is a well-known feature of espionage. In plain words, he is a man who ostensibly works for one country, but in reality does so only for the purpose of supplying information that is false. Such people are dangerous, naturally, for there is always the possibility that their deceit may go to the length of deceiving you. But in Otto Krempp's case we possessed the advantage of having him safely under lock and key, and when I sought my Chief's permission to twist Germany's tail a trifle through the medium of their discarded spy he readily assented.

A fine-looking man, this Krempp, tall, fair, and obviously a gentleman.

"Well," I said to him in his prison cell, "you have got yourself into a nasty mess."

He was looking very down in the mouth, as who would not with many years of prison before him?

"What would you say," I went on, "if someone were to give you the opportunity of gaining your freedom within a very short time?"

"You are playing with me," he cried angrily. "If I am a spy, and I do not admit it, I can at least request that I am not tortured by worthless promises. If you cannot speak seriously, please leave this place at once." Agitatedly he paced up and down his cell with clenched hands, his face the picture of despair.

"What would you say," I continued, taking no notice of his protest, "if I were to tell you that your own people have betrayed you?"

He turned on me like a flash.

"I would reply that it was a damned lie."

"Then read that," I said, thrusting in his hand the letter that had revealed his presence in France.

He read the letter in silence, his face a study in conflicting emotion.

"So," he remarked at last, "so, they thought fit to do this to me, who has done so much for them. The filthy, low-down *schweinhunds*, that they should treat a man in such manner."

"You did not think it possible, eh ?"

"Who knows ?" he replied shrugging his shoulders. "One day, perhaps, I shall exact my revenge."

"The opportunity is here now," I said. "We are going to give you the chance of regaining your freedom on two conditions."

"And they are ?"

"Firstly, that you tell us everything that you know about your Secret Service and the names of all your agents in France, and secondly, that you send to your employers in Berlin certain information that you will be provided with."

But he took a lot of persuading. To give him his due, he at first uncompromisingly declined to entertain my proposals. But I played upon his feelings, asking whether he thought any country that would send a man to his doom without raising a hand to help was worth any consideration at all, until he consented to do what we wanted.

His knowledge of Germany's Secret Service was not particularly valuable to us ; we already knew the greater part of what he divulged. But, oh, what a game we had sending through Krempp vastly important plans of our "75" gun ! Didn't some of the War Lords of the Wilhelmstrasse chortle with glee when

they obtained at last the secret of the new gun that eclipsed all the quick-firing artillery ever known!

We had the results of our little manœuvre revealed shortly after the outbreak of war when there appeared in the German battle lines a "77" gun, to all intents and purposes a copy of our "75". To judge by the disasters that accompanied its use, the plans that it had been built from were not quite so reliable as they might have been. Prisoners of war who had been working it told harrowing tales of premature explosions and whole batteries of men annihilated by shells that burst in the breach, though to be sure no one ever connected such happenings with the discarded spy, Otto Krempp. All's fair in love and war.

THE MISSING DUCHESS

THE MISSING DUCHESS

YOU may ransack the annals of crime from beginning to end but you will not, I affirm, come across a more astounding story than that of the missing "Duchess of Devonshire".

But not a real, live Duchess, I would have you know. The lady to whom I am referring was born somewhere about the year 1750, and although she enjoyed a good deal of fame during her lifetime, it was nothing at all to the notoriety that surrounded her a hundred years or so later. It was your justly celebrated painter, Thomas Gainsborough, who was more or less responsible for the hubbub that centred around the Duchess, for I have no doubt that had he not succeeded in so cunningly transferring her bewitching beauty to his canvas there would never have been the dramatic episode which for so many years engaged the attentions of the detectives of England, America and France.

The Duchess herself was certainly not a lady to shrink from the limelight's glare. In the year 1774, when she was Miss Georgiana Spencer, the daughter of your English nobleman, Earl Spencer, she was acclaimed as the loveliest woman in the British Isles. It was only fitting, then, that she should become the wife of the Duke of Devonshire. Vivacious, highly intelligent, she soon began to take an active part in her eminent husband's political campaigns, so much so that she became widely known as the Electioneering Duchess. Report had it that she would bargain her kisses for votes, and whether it was true or not the

fact remained that she did exert a potent influence on behalf of the Tories.

When the Duchess was at the height of her fame, Gainsborough painted her and exhibited her picture in the Royal Academy of 1783. One must have a description of this picture, because nearly a century afterwards it disappeared from the galleries of those famous Bond Street dealers, Messrs. Agnew:

STOLEN

Between half-past nine p.m., 25th, and 7 a.m. 26th inst., from the picture gallery 39b, Old Bond Street, the celebrated oil painting by Gainsborough of the Duchess of Devonshire; size 60 inches by 45 inches; without frame or stretcher. She is dressed in white, with a blue silk petticoat and sash, and a large black hat and feathers. She is turned three-quarters to the right, the eyes directed towards the spectator, the hair profusely curled, powdered and falling on the shoulders; the complexion is very brilliant, and the arms are folded across the waist. The background of the picture consists of sky, with trees on either side of the figure.

Many vicissitudes had the picture passed through previous to its disappearance from the place in London. Seventy years before, it had been in the possession of a dealer named Bentley, whose speciality was the restoration of "old masters". It would appear also that its value was but a mere cipher in comparison with the price put upon it when it had become the property of Messrs. Agnew. Bentley had acquired it for the trifling sum of £50 from an aged schoolmistress named Margaret Maginnis, who was so unmindful of its beauties that she cut a great deal of the wonderful lacework off the skirt so that the picture would fit over the fireplace in her dining-room! The only excuse that one could put forward for such vandalism was that Gainsborough, like so

many other painters, never came into his kingdom until long after he was dead.

More adventures came the Duchess's way. Bentley, being a dealer content with a small profit, disposed of the painting to a connoisseur named Wynn Ellis, in whose family it remained until May 1876, when it was put up for auction among the collection of pictures belonging to the Ellis family.

By that time people had begun to recognize Gainsborough's undeniable genius. Instead of a mere 60 guineas, the bidding for the Duchess started at 1,000 guineas and went up by leaps and bounds to the then tremendous figure of 10,000 guineas, which the auctioneers themselves, the famous firm of Christie, Manson and Woods, bid on behalf of the Earl of Dudley, one of the relatives of the Duke of Devonshire's family.

But there was someone else in the field prepared to go to almost any price so that the Duchess might be theirs. That was Messrs. Agnew, the wealthy Bond Street dealers, who had been bidding from the start. There was a hush in the auction room when the figure of 10,000 guineas was reached. Amidst profound silence the auctioneer looked round the room ready to drop his hammer. It was upraised, when suddenly a quiet voice said : "Another hundred."

A further pause. The hammer remained uplifted, but not another bid was made and at 10,100 guineas the "Duchess of Devonshire" had become the property of Messrs. Agnew. For three weeks the picture remained in their gallery, the object of much admiration and attention. London society folk by the thousand crowded to see it. Never in all her lifetime had the Duchess herself enjoyed such popularity. And then,

on the morning of 28th May, 1876, when the firm's employees opened the Galleries in the usual way, there was consternation. The "Duchess of Devonshire" had disappeared. True, the thief had been sufficiently considerate to leave the frame behind, but he had cut the picture out as neatly as one could wish, leaving behind him not a clue as to the actual manner in which he had done his nefarious work.

Indignation succeeded panic. A hasty message to old Scotland Yard brought along the famous Adolphus Williamson, he who was accustomed to stroll along Whitehall wearing a rose in his coat and a high silk hat looking anything but the detective he was. "Obviously," said Williamson, inspecting the blank frame, "a high-class robbery." How the thief had secreted himself in the Galleries, and what his object was in stealing such an unsaleable thing, remained to be discovered. But the Criminal Investigation Department would do its best. Anybody likely to have been connected with such gross vandalism would be subjected to the utmost rigours of the law.

Messrs. Agnew stimulated the search by offering a reward of £1,000 for information that would lead to the Duchess's return. But all in vain. The innumerable clever criminals at large in London were brought to Scotland Yard one by one and there put through severe interrogation about the missing picture, but with no avail. Time went on and Williamson could only conclude that the thief had smuggled the picture out of England and taken it across the Atlantic, where he might dispose of it to someone who would be content to gaze upon its beauties in private.

. . . . .

THE MISSING DUCHESS

Many years ago there lived in America a formidable specimen of a criminal named Adam Worth. He was not a big man in the physical sense, but his exploits in bank burgling, train robbery, and other depredations had earned him the title of the "Prince of Safemen". He was an associate of people like Mark Shinburn, probably the greatest desperado of all time, Charles Bullard, and other men who used to plunder American banks of huge sums of money. Their exploits would make a volume in themselves. They robbed the Ocean Bank of New York of £100,000, the Boylston Bank in Boston of £90,000, and then fled to Paris, where we had the doubtful honour of their company for two or three years.

They soon made Paris too hot to hold them and Bullard went back to America, while Adam Worth took up his quarters in London and very speedily made himself the most dangerous receiver of stolen property in England. It was well known to Scotland Yard that he "put up" many sensational robberies, the men he employed for the purpose being American criminals who had fled their native land to escape the attentions of the police.

He took the name of Harry Raymond, and under that guise lived a Bohemian life in the West End, mixing in good society and only suspected by Scotland Yard of being the master criminal he really was. Times innumerable did Williamson try to connect him with robberies that involved many thousands of pounds, but Harry Raymond, much better known in America as "Little Adam", was too cunning to be caught. In expensively furnished rooms in Piccadilly, he entertained millionaires, actresses and well-known sporting people, and thereby, no doubt, surreptitiously

obtained much valuable information. When the "Duchess of Devonshire" disappeared from the Agnew Galleries in 1876, Williamson at once taxed Harry Raymond with complicity. But Harry, having undergone many such ordeals, would admit nothing. Gradually the hunt died down, and to all intents and purposes the "Duchess of Devonshire" passed out of the minds of both police and public. Fresh sensations came along to occupy Scotland Yard, leaving Messrs. Agnew to console themselves with the thought that one day the picture would surely turn up again.

As one of the few officers of the Sûreté who spoke English well—my mother was an Englishwoman—I was usually chosen to conduct important investigations which lay outside France, and it was when I was at Scotland Yard on one of these occasions that I made the acquaintance of the man whom one might describe as the greatest detective in the world. It was William Pinkerton who, with his brother Robert, had founded in America a business known as the National Detective Agency.

A remarkable business it was! In England, France, or any other European country it would have been impossible for private individuals like the Pinkertons to have done what they did. Not for one single moment would officialdom have permitted unauthorised people to supplant the regular police. But the Pinkerton brothers, living as they did in a country where desperate criminals did practically what they liked without fear of the law, murdering, robbing, forging and committing atrocities secure in the

knowledge that bribery could always be resorted to, saw their chance of making a fortune. Gradually they took under their protection all the banks in America. It was more than sufficient for any highwayman to know that he would have William and Robert Pinkerton on his track if he ventured to rob some lonely bank. It was the proud boast of the brothers that once they took up a case they never abandoned it until they had brought it to a successful issue.

Frank Froest, an old friend of mine, introduced me to William Pinkerton, and in the course of our acquaintance he told me how Scotland Yard had communicated with him requesting that he should try and find the "Duchess of Devonshire". Froest himself, then superintendent of the C.I.D. at Scotland Yard, had spent some of his time trying to find the picture, but it was from William Pinkerton that I heard for the first time the full story of this amazing incident.

His inquiries in America conclusively established the fact that the Duchess had been stolen by an English burglar named Jack Phillips, acting under the instructions of Adam Worth. But where the picture had gone since not even the whole Pinkerton staff of detectives could ascertain. Whenever Adam visited the States—which was not infrequently—he was shadowed night and day. His lodgings and hotel rooms were ransacked, for William Pinkerton thought it must be rolled up in some secure hiding-place. But although he openly taxed Worth with knowing its whereabouts, he got no satisfaction. He could only leave it to time to disclose the secret.

As the years went on even the Pinkertons had

practically abandoned hope of finding the missing Duchess. One thing was absolutely certain; if Adam Worth did possess the picture, he had been too frightened to offer it for sale. The Pinkertons called upon every art connoisseur in the States seeking news of it, but not the slightest hint could they obtain of its whereabouts.

"I knew Little Adam had it," said William Pinkerton to me as he was telling me the strange story. "Occasionally, when I met him, I begged of him to give it back, but he only laughed at me and told me I was barking up the wrong tree.

"But one day I heard something. One of our famous crooks, Joe Elliott, whom we knew as Little Joe, one of our smartest burglars and forgers, got 'sent up' for ten years in the Auburn Prison in New York State. Joe was a bit sore about something. I think Little Adam must have double-crossed him over one of their deals. At any rate, the Warden of the prison dropped me a line to say that Joe Elliott knew something about the 'Duchess of Devonshire', and that if I liked to come along I could have an interview with him.

"But would Joe split ? Not a bit of it. The Warden had him brought into his office and asked him what he knew about the matter. In those days I had plenty of influence with the authorities. I offered to get him a reduction of his sentence, but he turned me down point blank. He professed to know nothing at all about the picture, and although we knew that he had been with Little Adam in England about the time it disappeared, it was useless going on with the matter."

Scotland Yard was communicated with and advised

to keep a closer watch than ever on Little Adam. Once or twice his rooms in Jermyn Street were searched, but no "Duchess of Devonshire" could be found there. The Pinkertons put the case on their files hoping, no doubt, that time would tell them more. Little Adam dropped out of active participation in big crimes, and to all intents and purposes one might say that the Duchess would never be seen again.

Now comes the amazing sequel, proving that the Pinkertons made no idle boast when they said that they never gave up hope nor relaxed their vigilance. It must have been somewhere about 1900 that William Pinkerton, whose headquarters were in Chicago (his brother Robert conducted the New York branch of the business) happened to meet a man very well known in American sporting circles, Pat Sheedy, who had brought out the famous heavyweight champion, John L. Sullivan.

One of the "boys" was Pat Sheedy. He had more than a nodding acquaintance with all the celebrated crooks in America and among his friends was Little Adam. Time had taken its revenge on Adam's prosperity, as it usually does with such people. He was down-and-out and had more than once been helped by Sheedy, who had known him for fully thirty years when he was a power in the great underworld of Chicago. William Pinkerton was also aware that Adam was finished, and the thought flashed across his mind that now was the time to solve the mystery of the missing Duchess.

"Pat," he said, "I hear Little Adam's on his last legs. You and he have been friends for many years, and so have you and I. I want you to do me a turn and at the same time do Little Adam a turn. I want

you to go to him and ask him to let you know what he has done with the Gainsborough picture that he stole from Agnew's Galleries in London in 1876.

"Tell him this," urged Pinkerton. "He's an old man now and he can't live long. If he'll hand the picture back I will personally guarantee that he won't go to gaol and, furthermore, he shall have the £1,000 reward if I have to pay it myself. I want you to impress upon him that it will be only an act of justice. The picture is no good to him or anyone else hidden away and, besides, the money will tide him over his last days. You know him as well as anyone else in the world and he'll do this for you if you ask him properly."

Sheedy happened to be going over to London and agreed to do what he could. He sought out Little Adam and found him, much as he expected, a wreck of a man. There could be no doubt that he was dying, and Sheedy, who had called upon Messrs. Agnew to inform them of what was afoot, suggested taking Adam for a trip to the Mediterranean where he would have him to himself and could probably bring him into a proper frame of mind.

Little Adam had turned bitter and vindictive. Practically all his old friends had deserted him, and he could see before him nothing but the shadow of the workhouse. At the best of times he had always been a difficult man to deal with, and Sheedy, wise and experienced with such people, made no effort to broach the real object of his mission until he had got his man down in the soothing air of the Mediterranean surrounded by the luxury he had enjoyed in the hey-day of his career. Shortly after they had left England, William Pinkerton sent me a cable asking

me if I could possibly meet them when they arrived at Marseilles, and as luck would have it, there being a case on the Riviera which required my presence, I met them there and had a long talk with them.

"Not a word about the picture," warned Sheedy beforehand. "The little devil knows there's something on hand. I'm going to wait another few days before I say a word about it."

It must, indeed, have been a difficult job because, as Sheedy told me afterwards, although Adam did not deny knowing where the picture was, he thought he would be arrested and end his days in prison if he revealed its whereabouts. But Sheedy cleverly played on his fears of a poverty-stricken old age and ultimately extracted from him a promise that he would return to America with him.

Scotland Yard was notified of the arrangement, and after consultation with the authorities it was agreed, not only that there should be no prosecution, but that Worth should receive the £1,000 reward at the hands of the Pinkerton brothers. Mr. Moreland Agnew, delighted at the prospect of getting the Duchess back, sailed for New York where, in March 1901, he was met by the Pinkerton brothers and taken to Chicago.

Adam had been as good as his word. Accompanied by Pat Sheedy he arrived in Chicago with the picture, handed it over, and Mr. Agnew not only immediately recognized it as the long-lost Duchess, but also had the immense satisfaction of finding it to be still in a perfect state of preservation. The £1,000 was handed to Sheedy, who in turn passed it on to Little Adam, while Mr. Agnew, after taking the picture back to England in a blaze of notoriety which even eclipsed

its disappearance twenty-five years previously, found that its value had been so greatly enhanced by the romantic circumstances which attended its history that he was able to dispose of it to Mr. Pierpont Morgan for the nice little sum of £25,000. And so ended one of the strangest episodes I have ever known.

And where had it been hidden all these years? Adam would not tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. All he would confess was that he had smuggled the picture out of England in the false bottom of a trunk. From time to time, as the Pinkertons continued to dog his movements, the picture lay hidden in various storage houses in Philadelphia, New York, and Brooklyn. Not a soul but himself knew it was there, and he even refused to disclose the place from which he had obtained it in the end. He did not live long to enjoy the money which Messrs. Agnew had paid him. In January, 1902, broken down in both health and spirits, his death took place in London.

THE MAN WITH NO UPPER TEETH

THE MAN WITH NO UPPER TEETH

IF anyone were to ask me what I consider the most important factor in the solving of crime, I would reply without hesitation that it is what the English call the long arm of coincidence. Times innumerable, when my investigations have found their way into a blind alley, has coincidence come to my aid.

About twenty years ago, in company with a colleague of the Sûreté named Sinitzky, I was about to leave for the Côte d'Azur when we received information from Nice that the police in that city were also seeking to apprehend two men named Georges Siccion and François Bonifassi.

They were a couple of bank robbers. According to the official particulars, they had boldly walked into the Crédit Lyonnais in the Queen City of the South, snatched a bundle of notes from the counter, as the American bank-sneaks used to do in France for so many years, and made their escape before anyone properly realized their intentions. By way of identification, it was mentioned that Bonifassi had lost all his upper teeth and that he was supposed to be wearing false ones.

My Chief, Sebille, being in a facetious mood, remarked as he handed me the warrant:

"Here is another nice job for you. You must also find a man with no upper teeth. You had better ask all the suspicious characters you meet to open their mouths. Be sure they do not bite you!"

One way and another, Sinitzky and I looked like having an arduous time. The gentleman we were

after rejoiced in the nickname of Gustav with the Long Hands, in addition to which it was stated, with that brutal frankness which invariably characterizes police dossiers, that he possessed thick lips, a black spot on the left side of his nose, and a very bald head. His hands were very large, as befitted an individual who got his living burgling houses.

Well, we didn't mind ; it was a bit of a relief to get away from Paris in the depth of winter, and *en route* to the Sunny South made up our minds, teeth or no teeth, that we weren't going to worry much about Siccion or Bonifassi. After all, they had their own detectives in Nice and there was no particular reason why we should do their work.

They had seen nothing of Gustav with the Long Hands in Nice, nor could we obtain any information about him from the crooks who travel south in the Riviera season. So off we moved to Monte Carlo, just on the offchance that Gustav may have been rash enough to try his luck there. There are plenty of places worth burgling in Monte Carlo provided you like to take the risk of making your escape. But, alas, the Monaco police keep too watchful an eye on undesirable-looking visitors. Nothing had been seen of my man there.

However, a pleasant night in the Principality with a flutter at the tables proved acceptable enough, and in the morning my companion and I travelled further eastward along the coast to Mentone. Not that we had much hope of finding friend Gustav in such a small place. Still, again, there were innumerable nice villas in the neighbourhood worth plundering ; Gustav might take a chance. We called at the local

police headquarters, announced our mission, but could obtain no assistance.

Sinitzky went off to make a few inquiries by himself while I, having nothing better to do for the time being, strolled aimlessly along the pleasant tree-lined little main street which runs parallel with the Mediterranean. I was thinking of nothing in particular, occasionally glancing idly in the shops, and watching the streams of English people passing to and fro. But suddenly I got rather a shock when I ran across a girl who had the boulevards of Paris written all over her.

To see was to act. Walking up to my *demi-mondaine* and courteously raising my hat, I asked her, in the vernacular, what was doing. She almost flew into my arms, so overjoyed was she at meeting a fellow Parisian.

"What a hole!" she cried. "Here am I in this dull village where everybody is so terribly respectable. I cannot get money anywhere. My man and I are so hard up that we are at our wits' end. If things do not improve we shall have to walk back to Paris."

"You had better have a bottle of wine with me," I suggested smelling news. Besides, we were beginning to attract a little too much attention; the passers-by were looking askance at my somewhat over-painted, becarmined lady friend. I am not ordinarily squeamish, but one has to draw the line somewhere. So we adjourned to a neighbouring café and began to swap confidences.

"What are *you* doing down here?" asked my companion. "M'sieu is one of the right sort, yes?" as much as to say I could tell her all.

"I open safes—in the owners' absence," I whispered.

"Oh !"

"Do you know of anything doing here ?" I inquired.

"It is no good," the lady assured me decisively, shaking her well-groomed head. "The police will not leave you alone for a minute. My man has left me and crossed over to Italy in the hope of finding something there. We have no money at all ; in fact, M'sieu, we are so hard up that he is unable to have his false teeth repaired."

"False teeth !" I exclaimed, almost jumping out of my seat as I remembered the warrant that had come to the Sûreté. Fortunately, the girl didn't notice anything wrong ; she was so intent on telling me her troubles that she went rattling on.

"Yes, is it not terrible for poor François ? His upper teeth are false and now, M'sieu, what has he done but broken them, so that he is unable to eat anything !"

I requested that I should hear more about poor François. The lady, nothing loath, related long and graphically how she had made François's acquaintance in Nice, helped him to spend the money of which he seemed so flush, and then accompanied him as far as Mentone where the tragedy had occurred. Apparently overcome by hunger, François had bitten so hard on a crust of bread that his false teeth had given way under the strain.

I murmured my sympathy and acceded to my companion's request for a loan to tide over her immediate difficulties. Then, having other things to do, I bade her good-bye and promised to see her again. What I did was to telegraph to Nice to say that the man with no upper teeth had been in Mentone and had probably crossed the frontier into Italy. If he came my way, I would arrest him.

Sinitzky and I, still having Gustav with the Long Hands to run down, went on our way. The frontier station at Vintimiglia proved barren, as did the town itself. Bordighera was not likely to attract a Paris burglar, so we merely gave that salubrious little resort what the Americans call the "once-over". There was nothing doing there, so we got into the train for San Remo.

They were tickled to death in that town to think they had a notorious criminal hiding himself somewhere. A functionary whose official description was that of the "Delegato di Publica Securezza", or, in plain English, the superintendent of police, almost embraced me when we made known our errand. He at once thrust a huge pistol into his pocket, called one of his men, and firmly announced his intention of combing San Remo from top to bottom.

Most of the "combing" was done in cafés. We visited so many of them that Sinitzky and I began to get a trifle muzzy. Not so the "delegato"; as far as I could see he hadn't enjoyed himself so much for many years. He was doing himself so well, indeed, that he didn't notice something that I noticed—an individual with thick lips who sat in a corner of one of the cafés we visited, sipping a glass of chianti and wearing his hat.

"Gustav!" I almost exclaimed aloud. For two pins I would have tackled him then and there, but I didn't want to make a scene in the place. Besides, my by now very good friend the "delegato" might have resented this trespass of his official privileges, and I wouldn't have offended him for the world.

But Gustav quickly smelt the rat. He was up almost the moment I suspected him, anxious to get

outside. I still didn't feel any too certain about him, because his hat was pulled right down over his eyes. But, as he passed me, I suddenly had a flash of genius. I took off my hat, gave him a most profound bow, and wished him *bon soir*. A gentleman, if nothing else, he also removed his hat and lo, what should he be but as bald as a billiards ball!

Everything happened in the flash of a second. Before I could make up my mind to accuse him, he was outside.

"Quickly," I called to the "delegato" and Sinitzky. "That is the man we want." They stared at me open-mouthed, but I was out on the pavement before they could answer.

Gustav had gone—just as I had expected. I could hear someone running away, but, alas, although the "delegato" turned out the entire police force of San Remo that night, Gustav could not be found. He must have run to earth somewhere, and the only consolation we could get was that he would find it next door to impossible to leave the town unnoticed.

One o'clock next day found us watching the train for Vintimiglia. All the roads out of San Remo had been blocked; our friend the "delegato" had seen to that. All Gustav had left to him was the train or the mountains. He chose the former, as I thought. The "delegato" shook hands with us as we clambered aboard to keep Gustav company as far as the French frontier, where we intended to arrest him, and the train puffed out. I am sure our man didn't suspect us for what we were.

The events that followed in the next hour or so were so breathless that it was difficult to keep trace of them. You have to change trains at Vintimiglia and go

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through the French custom house. Sinitzky was following Gustav, who might remember me from the night before, while I was walking up and down the platform keeping my eyes open. There was a fellow sitting down acting rather suspiciously; he had a black felt hat pulled right over his eyes, obviously desperately anxious to avoid recognition.

But surely it couldn't be Gustav! We had seen him enter the train at San Remo in a brand-new Panama, though he might have changed it to give us the slip. I gave him a good close look, but still he kept his head down.

"Here, you," I said suddenly, to the vast astonishment of the numerous country folk on the platform, "where are your identity papers?"

The man might have asked me what business it was of mine, but to my unbounded surprise he made no reply. Instead, pulling his hat still lower down, he took a flying leap from the platform on to the railway line, dodged between a couple of trains standing in the station, with me in hot pursuit.

He could run pretty well, too. But unluckily for him, he ran into a railwayman who was tapping the wheels of the trains with a huge hammer. That individual temporarily abandoned his occupation and threatened to tap the head of the runaway. Panting hard, I came hurrying up and snatched off the man's hat.

"Gustav with the Long Hands!" you will all exclaim. But you will be wrong. It was not Gustav at all. It was a man who opened his mouth to breathlessly ask in the vernacular of the underworld what I meant by pursuing him, a man whose wide-opened mouth revealed that he possessed no upper teeth.

In other words, I had chased a lion and caught a tiger.

François vehemently denied his identity when we got him in the *chef-de-gare's* office and searched him. But alas, all in vain, for did we not find in one of his pockets the set of broken teeth which had made his lady-love so desolate ?

Here is another story which I think is stranger still and is almost unbelievable, but it is perfectly true and, except that I had left the police when the second crime had occurred, I would have made it my business to have solved the mystery.

One day in 1911, a jeweller in Boulogne-sur-Seine, close to Paris, heard a terrific crash in his shop window. Hurrying out from the back room, what did he see but a man stealing his jewellery, who no sooner caught sight of the proprietor than he pulled out of his pocket a bomb which exploded in the shop and not only wrecked the place, but also seriously injured the unfortunate tradesman.

A nice thing to happen in a quiet little place like Boulogne-sur-Seine ! In the flash of a second the bandit had jumped on a bicycle and ridden off, pointing at the people who tried to stop him a huge revolver. He, also, bore traces of the explosion ; the villagers were able to say that his trousers were on fire.

Such a daring robbery and its serious consequences to the jeweller aroused all Paris to indignation. M. Guichard, the head of the Paris detective force, as well as the officers of the Sûreté Générale, whose jurisdiction in criminal investigation extends all over

France, at once set to work to run down this would-be assassin.

A week elapsed and then we received at the Sûreté information of a rather puzzling nature. It came from Lagny and said that an Italian workman had not been at his employment on the day of the robbery and, furthermore, that he had unaccountably remained indoors in his lodgings ever since, apparently engaged in the cure of some injury. He would allow no doctor in his room; the only persons who were permitted to enter were the younger daughter of the proprietor, who brought him his food and newspapers, and an Italian compatriot who worked in the same factory. This man, said the informer, brought drugs with him.

"Oh, oh!" exclaimed Sebille when the news came in. "This sounds like our man. You must go at once and ascertain the reason of this strange secrecy. Take your pistol with you."

Three of us went along to probe the mystery. First of all, we discovered that the bedridden one was named Pattucelli, and that he had already been expelled from France once and certainly had not received permission to return. I left my two men to keep surveillance on the house and returned to Paris to pick up Douzelot of the Paris police, who was co-operating with me on the job. The man was still in bed when we went back the following morning, as yet unsuspicious that we were on his track.

The little daughter, rather frightened, was sent up with the morning papers, four of us hard on her heels. She knocked at the door and a rough voice answered:

"Who is there?"

"It is I with your papers," said the poor child timidly, hardly knowing what was going to happen next.

"Come in," ordered the man inside.

But instead of the girl, there burst into the room four men, who jumped upon the bed and seized its occupant before he had time to realize that he was trapped. He fought like a madman to get his hand beneath his pillow, but we slipped a pair of handcuffs on him and found under the pillow, much as we expected, the big revolver.

An inspection of his body, conducted without any unnecessary delicacy, proved even more illuminating. He was burnt and bandaged all over his legs. Unfortunately, he couldn't possibly be removed except on an ambulance, so I sent one of my assistants for a doctor while I looked through his belongings.

Undoubtedly a dangerous customer to tackle! In a big trunk I discovered what looked to me to be still more bombs! I went off downstairs to telephone to the Municipal Laboratory in Paris to ask for an expert to come and examine them. Then, suddenly, I heard a terrific crash upstairs. I dropped the telephone and rush back to the room to find the two detectives I had left there gazing foolishly at a great gaping hole in the window. The Italian had taken a flying leap from the bed, flung himself headlong through the glass, and was then standing on some fanlights bleeding all over. He was almost naked; there had been a desperate struggle with the two officers to get him back, but he cried out that he would commit suicide before he would be taken alive.

"Enough of this nonsense," I said sternly, pulling my pistol out of my pocket.

"If you do not come in at once," I exclaimed to the Italian going to the window, "I shall put a bullet through you. Quick, before I fire."

That soon ended his little bluff. He slowly came up to the window, where my two men grabbed him by the arms and hauled him back. A few minutes later an ambulance arrived with the doctor. The Italian was taken away.

Then came another surprise. I had searched the room from top to bottom looking for the missing property, but couldn't find a trace of it. The Italian had refused to say anything, and I was thinking of going back to Paris when an old woman living across the road asked to see me. She, in common with all the inhabitants of the village, had been breathlessly watching the drama. She had seen the Italian sometime previous to our arrival throw from his window a brown cardbord box and thought it might be a bomb. One of my assistants volunteered to find out. He rescued the box and lo, what should it contain but the stolen jewels!

Pattucelli and his accomplice, another Italian who was arrested later, were both sentenced to long terms of imprisonment and expelled the country.

Now here comes the extraordinary sequel, which I have never bothered to investigate, though it would be well worth while.

About twelve months after the War, there occurred at the self-same jeweller's shop in Boulogne-sur-Seine a precisely identical robbery. The window was smashed by a man who grabbed some of the more valuable contents, a bomb was thrown as the jeweller came running out, and the miscreant made his escape on a bicycle. The only difference, and that I could not

ascertain definitely, was that no one saw his trousers burning. Possibly he was more fortunate on this occasion. But if I had still been connected with the Sûreté I would certainly have found out whether Pattucelli had come back to France. One may stretch the long arm of coincidence to almost inconceivable lengths, but I, for one, am firmly of the opinion that Pattucelli, imbued as the Italians are with a passionate love of revenge, had waited all through the long years of the War for the time when he could show us that we were probably not quite so clever as we thought.

AN EPIC OF '15

NOT far out of Dunkirk, and mainly used as a seaside resort for that city, there lies the pretty little place of Malo-les-Bains. One could not call it in the least pretentious; in the winter time, when the fierce south-westerly gales come sweeping up the English Channel, Malo-les-Bains is deserted. Huge seas crash upon its sandy shore and no one, except perhaps a few stray people who live there for cheapness, is to be seen.

But the last time I saw Malo-les-Bains it was in its glory. It was in the summer of 1908; gaily painted little villas, all spick and span for the season, gorgeously-striped bathing boxes and a dense crowd of youngsters enjoying themselves on the sands, made a scene of gaiety which I could well have enjoyed with the necessary time at my disposal.

Unluckily for me, I had come to Malo-les-Bains on other and more serious matters. Reports had been received at the Sûreté in Paris that a considerable amount of smuggling across the Belgian frontier close by was taking place, and my Chief instructed me to go down and take what steps I liked to put a stop to it.

I had not been long in Malo-les-Bains before I ran into an old comrade of the days when I was serving my time in the Army, one Jules Jacquet. Metaphorically, as is French fashion, we fell upon each other's necks and embraced. The business I had in hand was not so serious that I had to devote day and night to it. Jules, who was holiday-making,

introduced me to his family and also to his brother, Camille Eugene Jacquet.

Ah, what a figure of a man was this Camille Jacquet! Tall, dark and handsome, possessed of that debonair, devil-may-care appearance that only comes to a man when he has seen the world, I took an instantaneous liking to him and at once became his friend. He had settled down in life now, he told me, with a merry twinkle in his eye which belied his words. But in proof of his statement, he pointed to his two lovely children.

"And now," said brother Jules, when the three of us were seated in a café on the plage discussing a bottle of wine, "what brings you to this part of the world? You are not, I know, much of a man for the seaside. It is the boulevards that attract you."

"I have work to do," I replied. "Sebille has sent me down from Paris to capture a smuggling gang that is working between here and Belgium. I have half a dozen men with me and it may be that I shall be some time here. Nevertheless, there is no reason why we should not meet. It will suit my purpose very well to pose as a holiday-maker."

I could see that Camille Jacquet was beginning to grow highly interested. His eyes sparkled.

"What is that?" he inquired. "Smugglers! Do not tell me we are going to have a little excitement in this place."

"Yes, I think so," I said. "A great deal of tobacco, wine and silk is being smuggled. My information is that this gang has confederates on both sides of the frontier and that they are also in league with some of the railwaymen. A regular traffic has been going on for a long time past."

Camille became almost a new man.

"Ah," he remarked, rubbing his hands, "this sounds more like life. Tell me, my dear Cassellari, are you in want of any assistants?"

"Well," I said taking a good look at his athletic frame, "I could do with your help, but this is quite a serious proposition. There will probably be some fighting; we know that these smugglers carry arms. Maybe they will shoot when they are faced with capture. I am afraid it will not do to allow you to help me in any way."

But would that satisfy Camille? Not a bit of it. All that day he persisted in his determination to accompany me, and in the end, after informing him that I would only accept his aid if he gave me an undertaking in writing absolving me from all responsibility if anything happened to him, I fell in with his wishes. Gladly enough from the purely personal point of view; I had not great faith in the local police, for a variety of reasons which need not be enumerated.

As events turned out, Camille did not have quite the exciting time he expected. Up to a point, everything turned out all right. Six of us, fully armed, were hiding in a railway truck alongside the road coming from Bray Dunes along which the smugglers would have to pass. It was a bright, moonlight night; for fully a mile one could easily discern the slightest detail.

An hour went by. Suddenly we saw coming up the road the smugglers' vans, which we knew to be laden with contraband to be unloaded at a disused villa just across the Belgian frontier. The smugglers passed us without the slightest suspicion of our presence.

They were a hundred yards away when I gave the signal to chase them. We all jumped from the truck and rushed towards them, when suddenly I heard a loud cry. Camille, recklessly anxious to be first, was lying on the railway line with his foot pinioned in the points.

I ran back towards him and found him lying on his face groaning with pain.

"What is the matter?" I asked anxiously.

"Matter!" he exclaimed. "*Mon Dieu!* I thought I had been shot. Pull my foot out, there's a good fellow."

He was obviously seriously hurt. I let my men continue the chase while I took off his boot to see if I could do anything for him. Short as the time had been, his foot had already swollen to twice its size, and I stayed by him while the smugglers' carts went trundling on in the distance.

Half an hour went by, when my men came back bringing with them five of the smugglers. I instructed them to take their prisoners into Malo-les-Bains, and when that had been done to come back with a conveyance in which I could remove Camille to a hospital. Poor chap! He did not mind his injury so much as the fact that he had missed his night's fun. However, he had to lie on his back for something like a month after I had left Malo-les-Bains, and I heard no more of him until 1918 when the War was just coming to an end.

The circumstances were terrible in the extreme. I was then employed, as I had been throughout the whole of the War, in the Intelligence Service. For over four years I had been engaged in counter-espionage work. When the tide had turned, and the German Armies were frantically retreating back

through the occupied territory to their own land, I found myself in Lille with a captain of the British Army.

One day, to my intense surprise, I received a visit from a charming young lady, who introduced herself as the daughter of my old friend Camille Jacquet. She had married since I saw her in Malo-les-Bains, but that had nothing to do with her visit. I did not even know her, for much had happened since 1908, and the girl, who was now Madame Deschamps, had changed out of all recognition, as well she might, seeing what she had gone through since 1914.

It was a strange story she had to tell me.

"You know, of course," she began, "that my father is dead. He was shot by the Germans in 1915, and I thought you would like to know how he came by his end. He died for his country, as bravely as any man on the battlefield."

With that, she burst into tears and some little time elapsed before I could calm her. But when she had recovered her composure she went on to tell me an epic story of the War very similar to that of your glorious Nurse Cavell.

Her father had been in business at Lille when the Germans occupied the town in 1914. Their advance had been very speedy, so much so that numbers of French and British soldiers were still in the town. Escape was more or less impossible, for the entire district was surrounded by German armies.

The Germans captured some of the soldiers and sent them back to Germany as prisoners of war, but large numbers of them were concealed by the inhabitants of Lille at the risk of their own lives, fed as far as was possible in the dangerous circumstances

existing in a town occupied by a brutal enemy, and assisted to make their escape to the Allied lines when opportunity permitted.

Camille Jacquet, trapped though he was in occupied territory, refused to be daunted. He at once set to work organizing a service whereby these soldiers could get away, if not into that part of France held by the Allied army, at least into Holland disguised as Belgian peasants.

As the War went on, with Jacquet at the head of a Red Cross committee which ostensibly busied itself in succouring wounded soldiers, it was found possible to conceal and help British aviators who had fallen into the enemy lines without being found by the German military police who were continually searching the countryside for stray prisoners.

Unable to fight, Jacquet and some of his friends risked their lives daily in the Allied cause. It was too much to hope that the Germans would not become aware of the gallant work they were doing. It was an act of war ; that Camille knew quite well, but he went on, as Nurse Cavell did, content to give up his life if need be.

Towards the middle of 1915, the German Military Governor of Lille definitely knew what Camille Jacquet and his friends were doing. As in the case of Nurse Cavell, methods typically German were employed to trap the people engaged in the work. An *agent provocateur* was employed, a wretched, degenerate creature of the name of Richard who, I am very pleased to say, was arrested after the War, tried by a French court martial, and executed for the base treachery he displayed against his own country. It was not only the unfortunate Camille Jacquet

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that he and other loyal citizens of Lille who were condemned to death by this man's treachery. From all over the territory occupied by the Germans during the War evidence was forthcoming that Richard had been a German spy specially employed for the purpose of betraying people who had committed no other sin than that of doing their best for the cause of the Allies.

About the end of June, 1915, when Richard had surreptitiously acquired a full knowledge of Jacquet's organization, the Germans arrested Camille Jacquet and his friends and took them to the prison in Antwerp, which was then the headquarters of the German spy system on the Western Front.

I do not know what sufferings my poor friend underwent at the hands of the enemy during the time he was incarcerated there. One cannot doubt that he was subjected to all manner of torture, for the Germans were not merciful in their treatment of the unfortunate people who fell into their hands in such circumstances. But of one thing I am certain : Camille Jacquet neither betrayed the people he had left behind in Lille, nor did he give the Germans any information as to what he had been doing. In all probability they offered him his life if he would do so, but if I knew the man he would basely spurn such treacherous proposals.

He was in the prison at Antwerp from 11th July, 1915, until 9th August of the same year, and I would like to mention that during the time he was there he sedulously studied a German grammar in the hope of being able to understand what would be said in the great ordeal that lay before him. This same grammar was given to me by his daughter as a keepsake. Set out in it, in a firm hand that spoke better

than words of the unquenchable spirit of this gallant patriot, was the following inscription :

Souvenir of my sojourn at the Antwerp prison.
From July 11, 1915, to August 9, 1915,
At the Citadel of Lille from August 11, 1915,
to September 22, 1915.
Shot this same day at 6 a.m. in the fosses of
the Citadel.
Cell No. 17.

Camille Jacquet.

After the Germans at Antwerp had finished with him and his friends, they were taken back to Lille to be tried by a court martial that was nothing but a travesty of justice. According to what Madame Deschamps told me, it was known in the town that the Kaiser had given strict orders to make an example of any French subject assisting the Allied troops. The farce was carried to the length of providing counsel for Camille and his friends. Camille himself was defended by Advocate-Oberleftenant Meyer, Doctor-at-Law, but, of course, the whole proceedings were a waste of time.

Altogether, twenty members of Jacquet's committee were put on their trial. They made no denial of what they were alleged to have done. One may visualize the pitifulness of the whole tragic affair ; a court in the Hotel de Ville of Lille, packed with German soldiers, the prisoners, defiant to the last, facing a tribunal of German military officers commanded by their Emperor to carry out the rules of war without mercy.

Five of them were sentenced to death, the remainder being ordered various terms of imprisonment. The five were :

Camille Jacquet
Ernest Deconninck
Georges Maertens

Sylvere Verhulst
Leon Trulin

Camille, who had become a wine merchant by trade, was adjudged the ringleader. Ernest Deconninck, a tradesman in Armentieres, was his first assistant, while Georges Maertens, commercial traveller, collected the funds of the organization and distributed the money, as well as food and clothing, to hidden men. Sylvere Verhulst was a former notary's clerk, who guided the men trying to make their escape into Holland. Leon Trulin had not been actively connected with Camille Jacquet's organization, but the Germans accused him of being privy to many escapes and also condemned him to death.

The frantic attempts of the doomed men's families to avert the executions proved unavailing. Camille's so-called advocate, in response to a passionate appeal addressed to him by Madame Jacquet, replied in the following letter :

> "I regret very much, but it is not possible for me to implore the Kaiser's clemency. The Military Governor has decided that the executions must take place and therefore I can do nothing."

At daybreak on the morning of 22nd September, 1915, the day preceding that fiercely-fought Battle of Loos, when the Germans discovered to their dismay that Kitchener's Army would be a formidable fighting factor, Camille Jacquet and his four friends were led out for execution. One may, indeed, call it nothing less than murder, for these men had done nothing more than fight for their country to the best of their ability and the opportunities at their command. It may also be permitted to remark that the Germans were never adequately equipped with a

sufficient knowledge of psychology to realize the effect of their brutal behaviour on the world at large. Probably, at the time, they did not care. But, as with Nurse Cavell and Captain Fryatt, they speedily discovered that civilization could not, and would not, tolerate the unforgivable atrocities that marked their occupation of France and Belgium.

Camille, I know, met his death like a man. Besides that glorious monument which has been erected in Lille to the memory of him and his four gallant friends, he had the distinction of being specially mentioned in Army Orders by Marshal Joffre :

> THE GENERAL COMMANDING-IN-CHIEF mentions in dispatches of the Army :
>
> JACQUET, CAMILLE EUGENE, tradesman in Lille, sentenced to capital punishment by the Germans and the sentence carried out at the Citadel of Lille the 22nd of September, 1915, charged with having supported, concealed, given shelter and assistance to French and British soldiers and assisted their escape. He died as a hero, with his hands free, eyes unbound, shouting : "Long life to France—Long life to the Republic."
>
> At GENERAL HEADQUARTERS, January 15, 1916.
> The General Commanding-in-Chief,
> (signed) J. JOFFRE.

He and his brave fellow citizens died that others might live. They died, not in the heat of battle, but on a cold autumn morning at the hands of a platoon of German soldiers, with nothing but the spiritual assurance that they had done their best for *la belle France*. The great monument which stands at the angle of the boulevards Vauban and de la Liberté shows four of them standing against a wall, while on the left, in a recumbent posture, is the remaining member of that tragic little party of heroes that faced the German rifles on the fatal September morning. Glory be to the dead !

THE BLACK HAND

THE BLACK HAND

IT is worthy of note, if not altogether a matter for congratulation, that our criminals in France are endowed with a strong sense of originality. Not for them is the beaten path. All their wits are devoted to inventing some new form of rascality which naturally enough proves extremely profitable until such time as justice takes a hand in the proceedings.

The motor bandits of Paris, that formidable gang of desperadoes under the notorious Jules Bonnot, who plunged all France into terror for the better part of twelve months, were the originators of what is now easily the greatest menace to law and order. One may also add a grudging tribute to the people whose exploits I have narrated under the title of "Rat-Hunting on the Riviera".

But for sheer downright impudent resourcefulness it would be hard to beat the story I am about to relate concerning the blackmailers of Marseilles. They went on their wicked way comparatively unchecked for a number of years simply because their victims were not only afraid, but ashamed, to complain to the police as they should have done.

It is well known, of course, that on the Riviera there are thousands of ladies who make a habit of staying every year while their husbands, whom necessity compels to stick to business, are only able to join them at intervals. Prosperous merchants of Paris, Lyons, Lille, Bordeaux, as well as many Englishmen, have long made a practice of sending

their wives to the Côte d'Azur for the winter months. For themselves, it is not possible to snatch more than a week or two in which they may enjoy the semi-tropical warmth of the Mediterranean.

At the time I am referring to, 1906, there lived in Marseilles a baker named Joseph Mirabel. At least, his rascally associates described him as "the baker", and for all I know he may at some time or other in his evil career have earned his living in the bake-house. He was a big fat fellow with a pale face, large staring eyes, and wore a beard. But the police at Marseilles knew him better as the head of a blackmailing gang who were styled the "*Maîtres Chanteurs*".

Master singers of a sort, they certainly were; at any rate, the unfortunate women who came under their sway had to dance to a pretty tune. This Mirabel controlled the band of international adventurers whose headquarters were in Marseilles. There were Greeks, Italians, Corsicans, Spaniards, and Frenchmen all working under his orders, and when I say that Mirabel held over them the power of life or death and, occasionally, had them killed when they disobeyed his instructions, it will be realized that "the baker" was not a person to be trifled with. It was said, with what truth I am not prepared to state, that Mirabel himself was one of the old "Nervis" of Marseilles, a gang of bravoes who were prepared to assassinate anybody for a hundred francs.

No doubt he found himself getting on in years and not so anxious to have an appointment at the guillotine one fine morning. Also, a great idea had occurred to him. In the course of his peregrinations along the Riviera he could not help noticing what a

large number of apparently well-to-do women there were walking about absolutely unprotected, or gambling in the Casinos of Nice and Monte Carlo, smothered in jewels, with nothing better to do than kill time. So he went back to Marseilles and there, one may assume, held close converse with another pretty rascal in the shape of Joseph Baudouin.

A nice old villain, this Joseph! I had known him for a good many years as a forger of banknotes, while on numerous occasions he had fallen foul of the police for robbing seafaring men in gambling houses close to the docks.

Between them they hatched a highly ingenious method of making money. One naturally does not know what actually took place between them, but in all probability it was something like this:

"Baudouin, all these years we have been wasting our time. Instead of getting a paltry few hundred francs at a time and for ever dodging the meddlesome police there is a fortune awaiting us without the slightest risk."

"How so, *mon ami*? You were always of an original turn of mind. What is it you have discovered now?"

"It is like this," Mirabel no doubt replied. "I have been taking a trip into Cannes and Nice and Monte Carlo, and there I have seen hundreds of rich women who seem to have nothing better to do than to spend their money. They get up of a morning, stroll along the promenade, and then take their *dejeuner*. Of an afternoon, if there is no cavalier in attendance, they make their way into the Casino and there they gamble in a way that makes my mouth water. They play with *milles*, as you and I would play with francs.

And their jewels! I tell you, Baudouin, it is all wrong."

"But how are you and I to get money out of these rich ladies?" asked old Joseph. "You do not need me to tell you, Baker, that we are not exactly as good-looking as we used to be. I will not say that I myself have forgotten the gentle art of making love, but, alas, the ladies no longer run after me as they used to."

"Bah! You are a fool," said the Baker rudely. "I have another and much better plan in my mind. Are there not dozens of handsome young men who will be only too willing to do what I tell them provided it is likely to be worth their while?"

Then and there he propounded a scheme the like of which we have never known in France before or since. It was blackmail of a kind that made it almost impossible for the victim to complain, either to the police, or her family and friends. For it involved the woman in scandal which would probably have broken up her home and wrecked her life for evermore.

One could not definitely ascertain, of course, exactly when the "Baker's" diabolical conspiracy first began to operate. In all likelihood, it had been going on for two or three years before whispers of it reached the Sûreté.

The *modus operandi* seemed, like most great ideas, simplicity itself. Between them, Mirabel and Baudouin enlisted the services of a gang of adventurers of Southern origin, unscrupulous rascals capable of any crime from murder downwards. Some of them came from Marseilles, Corsica, Algiers, Naples, in fact, from all the Mediterranean cities where you can

always find clever, well-educated rogues waiting to prey on their visitors.

One of these handsome scoundrels, supplied with an elegant wardrobe and plenty of money, would be sent to stay at one of the big hotels along the Côte d'Azur, or maybe to one of the spas such as Vichy, Vittel, or Royat. Staying at these places would be plenty of elderly women, rich, with nothing better to do than find amusement. It was necessary, of course, that they should have husbands somewhere.

But what could be easier, in these resorts of the idle rich, to find temporary alleviation of the monotonous luxury than the society of a dashing young cavalier whose manners were *sans reproche*, whose only desire, apparently, was to please. There are thousands of such friendships made on the Riviera every year. Most of them, true, come to nothing, but if the "Baker" of Marseilles knew his business there would be quite a few that would turn out a profitable investment for him.

It was the duty of the "Baker's" lieutenants to make the acquaintance of some lonely, elderly woman with a wealthy husband in the background. Discreetly at first, so that she should not be alarmed, he was to pay her attention until the time had come for serious business. One day the lady would be invited by her new-found friend to go for a walk in some lonely spot. They would reach an unfrequented walk in the mountains and sit down on a bench. Then, suddenly, the man would drop on his knees, passionately seize the woman in his arms, telling her that he loved her with a deep and abiding intensity which would no longer brook concealment. Fiercely,

with brutal strength, he would cover his no-doubt flabbergasted companion's face with kisses and hold her to him so tightly that escape was impossible.

If he had played his game well and had selected the right victim, his kisses would be returned. Then, with dramatic suddenness, Nemesis would appear upon the scene in the shape of an ancient gendarme, a highly-respectable-looking old gentleman of the *garde-champêtre* type, complete in official uniform, cap and badge.

"What is this, Monsieur? And how dare you, Madame? What is the meaning of this disgraceful behaviour? Kissing and embracing in public! *Mon Dieu*, never have I seen such a thing in my life. I must have your names and addresses."

Then would follow a pretty little scene, all carefully rehearsed. The lady would be covered with confusion, the young man indignant at first, and then placatory on realizing that the old officer was in earnest.

"If you must take a name," he would say to the policeman, "please take mine. It is I who am to blame."

"Ah, no, I must have both your names. There is too much of this sort of thing going on."

"Will you take what money I have got and say nothing more about the matter? You are a poor man, I know. France does not treat well the people who have spent their lives in her service."

"No, Monsieur, I cannot do that. I have a wife and family to support, and if it came to the ears of my superiors I would be dismissed and also lose the pension I have worked for so many years."

"Come, come," the cavalier would say. "Money is

money all the world over. Be sure that Madame and I will say nothing. There can be no risk of discovery, for only you, besides ourselves, will know anything about this dreadful matter. Here," pulling out of his pocket a couple of thousand francs, "take this and let us go."

"Two thousand francs is not a lot of money for a man who may lose his pension," the policeman would say, showing signs of relenting. "What does Madame say?"

Madame, standing by with fear-distended eyes, distressfully wondering what was to be the outcome of her indiscretion, would usually clutch her lover by the arm and beg of him to offer the obstinate officer anything to let them go.

It didn't do, naturally, to prolong the drama unduly. There was always the chance that a real gendarme might come along, or some stranger who might evince undue curiosity as to what was taking place. So in the end, after much hesitation, the policeman would put the two thousand francs in his pocket and accept a verbal promise from the young man to have another three thousand francs sent to him in the course of the next few days.

One could only imagine the feelings of the wretched woman as she returned to her hotel to ponder on the foolishness that had made her respond to the passion of a comparative stranger. It soon came home to her that she had to foot her part of the bill. That very same night, maybe, her cavalier would seek her out and regretfully state that he found he hadn't sufficient money to pay out the policeman as promised. She must let him have a substantial sum —and quickly at that.

How many times this trick was played we could never discover. But it must have been worked in hundreds of instances where we only got a whisper of what was taking place. Mirabel himself, as far as we could hear, played no active part in trapping the women. He remained the master mind in the background, trusting to his old friend Joseph Baudouin, who usually acted as the policeman, to hand over the proceeds of the blackmail. Baudouin almost invariably worked in company with his good-looking nephew, Albert Trenty, a dangerous young criminal known to the Marseilles underworld as "Chou-Chou". There was another choice specimen who occasionally played the policeman in the person of old Bizot Marius, a man who had practised every form of crime known to civilization.

The money that was actually paid by the woman on getting back to her hotel was, of course, only the beginning of the blackmail that was levied upon her. Periodically she would receive letters from one of the members of the "Baker's" gang that the policeman had had a fit of remorse and wanted to report his lapse of duty to his superiors so that he should not be in any trouble if the matter leaked out. Terrified, the woman would obtain the money from somewhere hoping to have heard the last of her foolishness.

Little she knew the character of the men she was dealing with! At regular intervals would come peremptory requests for more money, compelling her to borrow from her relations and friends, dispose of her jewels and replace them with false ones, while all the time she lived in mortal dread of the threatened exposure.

The most amazing stories came into the Sûreté from all over France. It seemed that the blackmailers of Marseilles spent about three months in the year staging their cruel plots and the remaining nine months in extracting the money. To obtain evidence enough to arrest the principal offenders seemed well-nigh impossible. Women whom we were sent to interview denied any knowledge of blackmail, though their strained faces and fear-haunted eyes told a different story.

Nearly every officer in the Sûreté was engaged upon the case, but many months went by before we could find a woman with the courage to go into court and tell of what had happened to her. It is always the same in blackmail. In England, you have the excellent system of suppressing the names of the people who have been victimized. In the case of the Mirabel gang, although the Press gave immense publicity to their exploits, we knew from the beginning that very few witnesses would dare to appear in court and incur the social ruin that was almost sure to follow when their indiscretions became public property. There were dozens of women we could have put under oath who could have told incredible stories of the hush money they had paid to the "Baker's" gang. But we knew, in fact, we were told by some of the ladies concerned, that they would commit suicide in preference to facing the humiliation of cross-examination in court. It was just touch and go whether we convicted any of the blackmailers at all.

Our investigations took a very long time, with much wearisome interrogation of women who at first denied all knowledge of any indiscreet *affaire de cœur*. My

friend, André Benoit, now the head of the Police Judiciare in Paris, had charge of the case, and conducted it with the energy characteristic of his reputation among the criminal classes of France. André is a very tall man with hair that is inclined to be auburn. At the time of this blackmailing scandal he was wearing a very long beard, and the gangsters of Marseilles, with the irreverence typical to their nature, used to call him—behind his back—Jesus Christ.

It was perfectly amazing the number of highly-bred women who fell into the clutches of the "Baker's" professional lovers. One day, in one of the pretty towns of the French Riviera, I was sitting in the hall of the leading hotel ostensibly watching the movements of one of the gang. To my intense surprise, I saw a very beautiful Russian countess whom I had previously met in Cannes walking out of the hotel arm in arm with one of the blackmailers.

I had not a lot of time to spare in the place, for I had to go on to San Remo the same night. But I waited long enough to speak to her when she came back alone.

"Madame," I said to her in the privacy of the manager's office. "You will pardon me if I give you a warning. I am an officer of the Sûreté and it is my duty to tell you that the man with whom you went out this morning is much too dangerous to associate with you."

The lady naturally looked a trifle disconcerted, as well as annoyed.

"How is that, Monsieur? Surely it is no business of yours?"

"I think it is," I replied. "That man is a black-

mailer. He is what we call a *maître chanteur* of Marseilles."

It took me quite a long time to convince the countess that I knew what I was talking about. Fear began to come into her eyes, and then I realized that she also had been making a fool of herself. At length she confessed that she had been giving the man money, not a great deal but, as I told her plainly, merely the beginning of further sums that would be extorted from her.

She thanked me warmly for my information. I did not hear until a week or so later what took place afterwards when she met her companion.

"What a modest man you are," she said to him, "to have concealed from me that you are a *maître chanteur*."

"*A maître chanteur* !" replied the man with affected surprise. "I do not understand you, Madame."

"Oh, yes, I think you do. A *maître chanteur* of Marseilles. But maybe it is not you who sings. You merely call the tune that you like your victims to sing. Is that not so ?"

It must have been, because that particular *chanteur* made the best of a bad job and slunk away in search of other and more credulous victims.

Many months elapsed before we found it possible to put the ring-leaders of the gang in the dock of the court at Marseilles, when Mirabel was sentenced to five years' penal servitude and five years' ban on living in large towns. Most of his associates also received varying terms of imprisonment. But the trial itself was the least satisfactory part of this astounding case. The more important witnesses for the prosecution had to be kept under lock and key while the

proceedings were taking place, for the "Nervis" of Marseilles were still strong enough to carry out their assassinations as they had done in the bad old days when Mirabel and Baudouin were serving their apprenticeship in crime.

HARBOUR NIGHTS

HARBOUR NIGHTS

SEAFARING towns are not particularly inviting places at the best of times. The only people who live there are those who have businesses connected with the shipping world. And such a state of affairs applies not only to France ; I once had the misfortune to spend a week-end in Liverpool, and I pray my patron saints that I shall not suffer another such experience again.

Most English people know Dunkirk. It is a big, capacious port supplying the needs of the industrial areas of Northern France, and is also used to a limited extent for Continental traffic via the Thames-side port of Tilbury. English impressions of Dunkirk are naturally unfavourable ; it usually happens that you arrive there in the early hours of the dawn after a crossing the reverse of comfortable.

Nor, I must confess, does it look much better under cover of night. Great arc lights, shining blue and high over the wind-swept basin, clattering trucks and shrieking engines, tell you more plainly than words that the motto of Dunkirk is : "Business First". I would go so far as to say, indeed, that the town's motto is : "Business First, Business Last, and Business All The Time."

One can well understand, then, that when my estimable Chief, Sebille, sent for me one day, in company with my colleague Sinitzky, whom I have already mentioned in this book as my companion on a memorable journey down south searching for a gentleman known as Gustave with the Long Hands, to inform me that I had to proceed to Dunkirk on a

most important mission, my face expressed no particular pleasure.

"Things are very serious," said Sebille, leaning back in his chair and eyeing us reflectively. "Information has come from the Chamber of Commerce, various insurance companies, and also the Nord railway, that a cunning gang of robbers is at work between the ships coming into Dunkirk harbour and the goods trains.

"Silks from China," he went on, "coffee from Brazil, bales of cotton, in fact, everything that comes into the port, is being stolen wholesale. The local police, the Customs House officials and the railway staff have done their best, but it appears impossible to catch the thieves. The matter has been reported to the Prefect of the North, who thinks it is much too important for him to deal with. He has sent it on to me, and I have decided that you and Sinitzky must go down and put an end to this gang."

A ray of hope must have lit up my face as I recollected that it was early summer. A month or two in Dunkirk might not be so bad after all. But Sebille, who could read your thoughts as easily as he could eat his dinner, at once diagnosed the symptoms.

"You need not think you are going to the North Sea for a holiday, my friend," he remarked. "This robbery had got to be stopped. I will take no excuse for failure. You will have reasonable time to identify these rascals—not one, mind you—but the whole lot. When you have done that, you will let me know and we will arrest them ourselves without any local assistance. I am afraid there is leakage going on. One never knows to what extent the men on the spot can be trusted. At any rate," he added, "the Dunkirk police have been unable to bring these

rascals to book, so everything now depends on you."

"This is a nice business," I said to Sinitzky with a wry face as we came out of the Chief's room. "We shall probably get plenty of kicks, if nothing else. I think we had better get busy."

"I think so, too," replied Sinitzky. "My holidays are due next month and I do not fancy spending them in Dunkirk."

With all due respect to Dunkirk, it is most emphatically not a place where you would go of your own accord. It has a population of about 35,000 people, most of whom are Flemish. Surprising as it may seem, the French language is not extensively spoken there, except among the better-educated classes. The Belgian frontier at Bray Dunes lies just outside the town, and the whole country towards Belgium is covered with sandhills. For many hundreds of years smugglers have found it a profitable spot. Hardly a week passes without fights taking place between the Customs officials and the Belgian and French smugglers who traffic in tobacco and such-like contraband. Still, there it was.

Guillemin, the head police official of the Nord railway, thoughtfully informed us when we called upon him on our arrival that we had better be provided with an assistant stationmaster's cap apiece and a special *carte d'identitie* in case we were shot !

"This is a nice place we've come to," I remarked, looking at Sinitzky.

"Yes," said Guillemin complacently, "most of my men are now armed with pistols. They have orders to shoot on sight anybody caught pillaging."

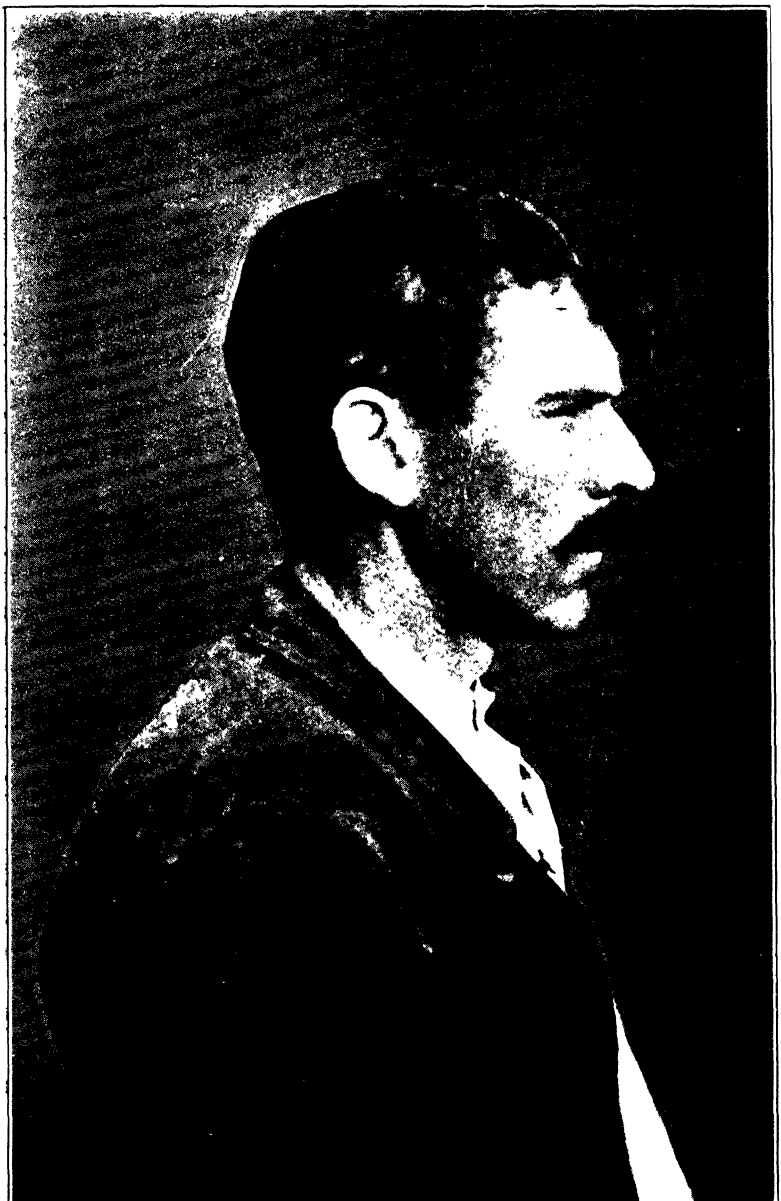
Paris seemed further off than ever just then. However, Guillemin went on to tell us everything that

had happened up to date, adding that he would explain our presence by letting it be known that we were chief engineers of the company who had been sent down specially to test some new engines that were being used on the line. Whenever we reported to him it should be not in our workmen's clothes, but in those we had brought from Paris. If that aroused suspicion, our reports were to go on to the Sûreté in writing and be sent back to him by post.

But oh! didn't we curse our fate when we found ourselves lodging in a small house outside the town kept by two old ladies who were very, very quiet. All our spare time was spent hanging about the railway yards closely watching anybody who acted suspiciously, while our evenings were devoted to sitting in the cafés around the harbour-side listening for a word or two that would put us on the right track.

The great thing was to obtain the confidence of the Flemish labourers who loaded the trains. Guillemin had told us that if we could successfully cultivate the friendship of one Poirier we might go a long way towards ascertaining what was taking place. Poirier had already been in trouble with the local police on suspicion of having taken part in the robberies, and I speedily decided that another and a better way to make use of him would be to bring him in on our side. "Honour among thieves" doesn't exist, as every detective knows.

To make his acquaintance did not prove difficult. The offer of a substantial bribe worked wonders, as I have always found with such people. But be sure we didn't trust him far in the beginning. We gave him certain things to do on the promise of payment, and shadowed him to see that he did them.



ALGOET, CHIEF OF THE SMUGGLERS

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"Poirier," I said to him at last, after I had come to the conclusion that he was not betraying our intentions, "I want you to introduce us to the inner circle of these Flemish boys. You may tell them that we are Paris apaches who have come to Dunkirk on account of some trouble with the police. You may also add that we are ready and willing to take a hand in anything that is going on."

"I shall not be betrayed?" asked Poirier fearfully. "These men would shoot me and throw me into the harbour the moment they suspected treachery."

"It will be quite safe. Just keep your mouth shut and nothing will happen to you."

Behold us, then, a night or two later, placidly sitting in the dirty little brasseries of the rue de la Passerelle and there making the acquaintance of the heads of the gang! A picturesque lot they certainly were. I bought liquid refreshment for Harry Ladgen, who was known as Harry the Indian, an individual named Octave, who possessed the high-sounding alias of "King of the Belgians", Torrebore, whom they called "The Smuggler" and, most important of all, Mary Kerseeker.

A wonderful woman was Mary, the type painters sigh for! She was more powerful than any man in the gang, with a fierce red face that made her look more like a dragon than a woman. Of a night, she would sit in a brasserie drinking huge quantities of beer and gin as though it were nothing but water. All the men treated her with abject humility; if they displeased her, she would pick up a glass and smash it across their faces on the slightest provocation. Her part, Poirier informed me, was to go across the frontier to Furnes, ostensibly to sell vegetables.

But her real business was disposing of vast quantities of cottons and silks which had been stolen in Dunkirk.

The actual head of the gang proved more difficult to cultivate. Algoet was his name, a tall, well-built fellow, strong as any professional athlete and always ready for any daring expedition. He was undoubtedly the master mind; even the formidable Mary paid deference to him.

In keeping with our pose, we worked about the station and the docks for some weeks, carrying luggage for people, unloading trucks and ships, and pretending that we were sleeping in country inns outside the town to dodge the police. As the weeks went by, and we had gradually come to be accepted as "good" boys, we could move about without suspicion. But gradually and unnoticed, we were collecting a vast amount of incriminating evidence against Algoet and his assistants. Of a night, when valuable goods were being unloaded from some recently arrived ship, we used to make our way to the harbour and hide ourselves unnoticed in a locked wagon bearing a label to the effect that it had to go to the workshop for repairs. None of the railway employees molested us; there we remained concealed all night peeping through small holes at the top and seeing a great many things that told us exactly how the robberies were taking place.

It was certainly simple enough. A loaded goods train would leave the harbour and proceed slowly through the streets towards the central station, and from there to the goods depôt, where the wagons were uncoupled to be made up into other trains and despatched to various towns in the North. Many a time, unseen by anybody, we saw, while a train was

proceeding close to the rue de la Passerelle, one of the "boys" who had concealed himself in a wagon leaving the harbour, stand up, push a case or a bale out of the train undetected by the guard who rode in the rear. With amazing opportunism, another member of the gang walking alongside the train would whisk the goods away in the space of a few seconds. Dunkirk is not a well lighted town. Several times we had to rub our eyes before we could believe that the thing had actually happened.

Gradually, we pieced together a complete chain of evidence. At the end of something like six weeks we knew not only all the members of the gang, but also where the plunder was being concealed. It was now time to move. We reported to Paris, through the highly pleased Guillemin, that we were ready, and in the course of a day or two there arrived all the important police officials of the Nord railway.

Experience had already taught us of the danger of making our identity known too soon. But that little detail did not enter into the calculations of the new arrivals. They expected us to meet them officially, and when they came out of the station they were rather annoyed to find no one but two rough-looking porters waiting to take their luggage. They asked us where Cassellari and Sinitzky lived, and on being directed to a tram which would take them to the street, got into it looking very displeased. The two porters stood on the platform outside while the distinguished new-comers sat inside obviously in a state of great annoyance.

Sinitzky and I had a good hearty laugh throughout the journey.

"Now then," said M. Escaude, the head of the

railway police, "where is the place? Do you know if Cassellari and Sinitsky know we are coming? It seems very strange they were not at the station to meet us."

"I think they were," I replied.

"You think they were!" exclaimed Escause in surprise. "Then why did you not tell us? We do not like being treated in this manner."

"Pardon, Monsieur," I said taking off my cap and making a profound bow. "Allow me to introduce myself, and my colleague Sinitzky."

The pair of us bowed simultaneously and Escaude, a good fellow, burst into a peal of laughter that carried him into our lodgings and as far as the table where there lay waiting an inviting repast. Even Sebille, who was not ordinarily given to mirth, laughed long and loud when I told him what had happened.

"Ah, those railway police!" he ejaculated. "Will they never learn?"

The end of the affair took place the following day. Algoet was arrested while disposing of some of his plunder, and one by one the various members of the gang fell into our hands by denouncing each other. But it was the Dunkirk police who got the credit locally for clearing up a very serious state of affairs. They didn't altogether like Sinitzky and I making it public that they had been unable to solve the mystery. We didn't mind; there was a nice big reward for the pair of us, and on the proceeds we went off to enjoy the holidays we deserved. But not at Dunkirk, for other reasons than the salubrity of its delectable sea breezes. Sometimes it doesn't do to make your deeds too well known. Dunkirk, as I have already said, is very dark in places.

A ROYAL ROMANCE

A ROYAL ROMANCE

MANY years ago, when I was a young non-commissioned officer serving my time in the Army, I became intimately acquainted with H.R.H. Lieutenant Prince Louis of Monaco. He is now, of course, the ruler of that picturesque little Principality which nestles under the Alpes Maritimes, but in the days when I knew him so well he was a subaltern in one of our crack cavalry regiments, the Chasseurs d'Afrique.

Like his father, Prince Albert of Monaco, the man who founded that famous Oceanographic Museum at Monaco which is famous throughout the length and breadth of the world, the Lieutenant Prince conducted himself very unostentatiously. It was rather difficult, certainly, for he was over six feet high, extremely handsome, and highly popular wherever he went. Very calm in his nature, simple in his habits, and completely indifferent to the notoriety that surrounded him wherever he went, he was, to my mind, the beau ideal of a ruling prince.

At the time I first came to know the Prince I was in garrison with my regiment at Constantine in Algeria. The Prince was my platoon officer and he was never anything but kindness itself to all the men under his command. Living as he did out of barracks, and having at his disposal unlimited money, he had it in his power to make life far more tolerable for his subordinates than is the case with the average French officer. Prince Louis had a villa of his own, and it was his custom to invite his sergeants and

corporals to take refreshment with him and discuss the affairs of the regiment. I still retain tender memories of the iced Pernod the Prince's staff used to serve. Anything cool in the middle of the Algerian desert was indeed something to remember.

Strange to say, it was then I did my very first detective work, long before I personally made application to M. Clemenceau to put me in the Sûreté. The manner in which it came about began in tragedy and ended in comedy. One night in Constantine, at a so-called music-hall known as the Alcazar, there appeared a Spanish dancer of wondrous beauty and smartness. Never before had such dresses been seen. One would laugh at such people in Paris or London, but there, in Constantine, boys of twenty or so, sublimely ignorant of the world, this Pepita Campos wrought havoc with the impressionable hearts of the gay young cavalrymen.

Pepita, apparently, had no time to waste on soldiers with nothing but their pay. Who could blame her? But, unfortunately, one of my intimate friends fell madly in love with the lady, and two days afterwards when she had scornfully spurned his advances, attempted to poison himself by drinking a whole bottle of laudanum during one of her performances.

War's sudden alarms are nothing more than is expected, but such an event, even in a country where death lurks round every corner, created quite an amount of excitement. I got the love-stricken one safely back to barracks, where the medical officer promptly poured a strong emetic down his throat and eventually pulled him round. The next day, with the virtuous indignation of hot-blooded youth, I went round to see Pepita and demanded to know what

she meant by playing Carmen in real life with my foolish young friend.

Pepita, to say the least of it, seemed entirely unrepentant. In fact, she began to cast languorous eyes at me, so much so that I had some slight difficulty in recollecting that I had come on my friend's behalf. Suddenly, to my intense astonishment, I saw on Pepita's mantelpiece a photograph of Prince Louis, taken in Oram in company with no less a person than Pepita herself.

"Hello," I thought, "this is rather strange. Maybe there is blackmail afoot."

I did not know when the photograph had been taken, but quite obviously Pepita had come to Constantine for the purpose of seeing the Prince. For all I knew, he may at some time or another have had an *affaire de cœur* with the lady, but as I thought of the *ménage* at the Prince's villa, where there already existed a mistress, as well as a tiny, toddling Princess, it occurred to me to be quite a good idea to purloin the photograph and tell the Prince what I had done. I instinctively smelt danger to the man I loved so well.

To steal the photograph then and there seemed rather rash, but there was another way out of the difficulty. Pepita being what she was, a first-class *cocotte*, one of those ladies who think "how happy I could be with either, were t'other dear charmer away," it proved simple enough to declare myself madly and violently in love with her.

The lady had already intimated with true Spanish passion that my unfortunate friend was not wanted. I, apparently, was a much more eligible *parti*. At any rate, we got on so well together that when I left her I had made an appointment for the following night, when I intended by hook or by crook to make

off with the Prince's photograph. Pepita had already told me that she knew him well; and one did not require to know much of the world to understand that she intended to blackmail him.

It was rather a delicate job to undertake without a certain amount of authority. In the morning, after we had been dismissed our first parade, I asked the Prince if I might speak to him.

"Yes," he said with a smile, "what is it? Anything, so long as you are not asking for leave."

"No, no, Your Highness," I replied, my courage beginning to desert me. "It is something much more serious."

"Well, come on, out with it," said the Prince. "I shall not eat you."

"It is like this, Your Highness," I blurted out at last, wondering all the time whether he would put me under arrest for my audacity. "Last night, in talking with that Spanish dancer who is at the Alcazar, I noticed that she had a photograph of you."

"The devil she has!" exclaimed the Prince, reddening up a bit. "Where was it taken?"

"In Oran, Your Highness. She also is in the picture. I was wondering if I ought to tell you."

"It is well that you have done so," said the Prince. "Did she say anything about it?"

"Sufficient to make me realize that she means no good, Your Highness. The thought occurred to me that this photograph would be better away from her."

"Ah," the Prince said, "it will be better, perhaps, that you do not interfere in this matter. I am greatly obliged to you, my friend, for telling me what you have done."

I duly kept my appointment with Pepita that night, but the photograph had already gone. What had happened in the meantime, and what had so

CASSELLARI IN POLICE UNIFORM

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mysteriously taken all the fire out of the meek and mild Pepita who greeted me after her performance, was a riddle I never succeeded in solving. I took the liberty of mentioning the disappearance of the photograph to the Prince, but beyond telling me never to mention the incident again he would say nothing.

Time went on. I became one of the detective officers of the Sûreté and had attained the rank of Commissary. I had always kept in touch with the Prince, who had then left the Army. In July, 1908, to my intense astonishment, I received a letter from him asking me to come and see him on a matter of the greatest importance.

He had not yet succeeded his father, Prince Albert. For something like nine years, on and off, he had been living a quiet life in Paris.

"I have sent for you on the most delicate matter," he began. "As you know, I have taken the little Princess away from her mother. The newspapers say that I have kidnapped the child, but it is not true. The child is my own and has been legally declared by me to be my daughter. But, unfortunately, the mother is making trouble, and I require your assistance. It is not desirable that she should have the control of a Princess of Monaco."

The Prince then went on to tell me an almost incredible story, much of which I knew, though I did not realize that the affair had reached such a serious state. It would be better, perhaps, in recapitulating this romantic episode in the life of Prince Louis, to reprint an account of the beginning of the trouble as it appeared in *Le Matin*, 28th January, 1908, six months prior to the Prince asking for my aid:

"Prince Louis of Monaco has kidnapped Madame Louvet's child. The news spread with great rapidity in the neighbourhood of the rue Benjamin Godard where the Prince has been living. Within half an hour, a representative of *Le Matin* rang the bell of Madame Louvet's apartment on the fifth floor No. 6 rue Benjamin Godard, near the Square Lamartine.

An old servant conducted our representative to Madame Louvet and requested that he should speak softly. 'Madame is taking a rest,' said the servant. 'She has suffered much.'

"From the next room could be heard the sound of hushed voices and also some sobbing. Looking extremely white, whiter even than the bed sheets, all her face ravaged by tears, her beautiful hair strewn over the pillow, Madame Louvet nevertheless maintained her courage.

" 'Is it true, madame, that the Prince has taken the child away?'

"Madame dramatically raised her hands.

" 'It is true. My Charlotte, my dear child, has been kidnapped. I don't want to know how you have heard of it. Sooner or later the scandal was going to be known. So much the worse for Louis ; it is his fault.'

"In a strained voice, with her eyes full of tears, Madame Louvet told this poignant story :

" 'For fourteen years I and Prince Louis have been together. After five years I gave birth to a child, this little girl whom we call Charlotte. This very day she is nine years old. The day after her birth she was legally adopted by her father, but I was foolish enough not to claim my maternal rights until three years after that. Legally, I know, the child is his.

" 'It came about that the Prince and I failed to agree and it was then that I made up my mind to claim the child. But, alas, it was too late. The Prince was fond of his little girl. Almost every day he took his meals at home on purpose to see her, to attend to her lessons and to play with her. But of an evening, when the child had gone to bed, he would leave me to myself.

" 'For six years I have stood the awful agony of it, knowing full well that our love had come to an end. Last Monday, the Prince, as usual, came to have his lunch here. He was sitting where you are now, smoking a cigar, with little Charlotte sitting on his lap. The time was 2 o'clock in the afternoon. I was lying down unwell, with no thought of the dreadful shock that was in store for me.

" 'All at once, the Prince got up and said to me unconcernedly : "It is time for the dancing lesson ; I am going out with the little one." Fearing nothing, I replied : 'Very well, and don't bring her back too late.' I kissed my little girl, little dreaming that it would be the last time I would be permitted to do so. Together they walked out, the Prince very calm in

his manner, the child joyful as she always was in the company of her father.

" 'Three hours later she had not come back. No thought of anything untoward yet entered my mind. I merely sent someone to the place where she took her dancing lesson, but to my utter astonishment the child had not been there that afternoon. Then I began to be afraid she had met with a serious accident. I telephoned everywhere, I called up friends who might give me assistance, but not a soul had seen her. Half-mad with terror, I even rang up the Prefect of Police, but even he could tell me nothing.

" 'But later in the evening there came the awful revelation. A lawyer called upon me and informed me without any waste of time that the Prince had decided to remove the child from my custody. I then learnt for the first time that I had no legal right to my poor little darling. I had been offered money, but what is that ?"

For six months following the break there had been trouble of a most distressing kind. One could not blame the distracted mother; it was unfortunate, perhaps, that she had undoubtedly allowed her legal right to the child to be vested entirely in the Prince. For something like six months there had been going on a game of hide and seek in which the mother, passionately trying to put her maternal love against the powerful official influence of the Prince, strove day and night to get the child back.

The Prince himself had certainly made no secret of the part he had played in the matter. Publicly he had declared that little Charlotte would be brought up as a Princess of Monaco and that he had no intention of allowing the mother to dominate her life in any way. That, then, was the position when he sought my aid to ascertain what Madame Louvet was doing, He was afraid, I gathered, that she might make some desperate move which would make the scandal even worse than it was.

I must confess that I had no liking for taking any

part in this tragic affair. I would not have been human if I had not harboured a certain amount of sympathy with the mother. On the other hand, the Prince was my friend and I could very well appreciate his attitude. But, as I say, it was an invidious task, the like of which I had not known before or since.

For some little time I was responsible for the maintenance of a strict watch on Madame Louvet's movements. She, poor creature, sought her child far and wide, but continually in vain. Ultimately, after a further six months, she was induced to settle down on the understanding that she would see her child at intervals in the presence of people appointed by the Prince.

The years have gone on since then. The little girl grew up, greatly beloved not only by her father, but also by her grandfather, Prince Albert, who created her Duchess of Valentinois. She eventually married one of the well-known family of Polignac who became Prince Pierre of Monaco, and to-day the little girl whom I first knew in Algeria thirty years ago is the hereditary Princess of Monaco.

Stranger still, indeed, is the fact that the mother is still alive. I have frequently met her about Paris during the last few years, and it is to her credit that she has suffered her loss with philosophic resignation, happy in the knowledge that her daughter is a great lady in the land.

The Prince and I corresponded until the War came. Then he succeeded his father as the ruler of Monaco and no longer has need of my services. He has a police force of his own while I, as befits my humble station in life, am merely permitted to muse over the story that I have called "A Royal Romance".

THE MOTOR BANDITS OF PARIS

THE MOTOR BANDITS OF PARIS

PART I

ROBBERY under arms! On the morning of 21st December, 1911, when Paris was busy bedecking itself for the Christmas but a few days off, there came like a thunderbolt out of the sky news of an astounding outrage in the rue Ordener.

Highwaymen in the heart of Paris! It was unbelievable. But, alas, the news lacked no confirmation. By midday the papers, with flaming great headlines, set out that a collector of the Société Générale, by the name of Ernest Caby, had been proceeding to a branch of the bank in the rue Ordener guarded by another employee named Peemans, carrying with him 300,000 francs in securities and 25,000 francs in money, when the incredible happened.

Without a word of warning, a stranger walked straight up to Caby, pulled out a pistol, and fired three shots into him. Peemans, horrified and stricken with fear, stood by in petrified astonishment while the bandit coolly snatched Caby's bag from him and threw it into a motor car which was slowly moving along the street close by. Caby lay on the pavement with blood pouring from wounds in his chest and neck.

The bandit scrambled into the car, turned round the moment he was in, and began firing wildly at the people who attempted to pursue him. In the space of a few seconds the car had disappeared and the spectators of the tragedy could only turn their

attention to the unfortunate Caby, who seemed at death's door. He was hurriedly taken off to the hospital while tidings of the outrage were telephoned to the police.

Paris was in a ferment; practically every officer in the city took up the hunt for the robber and the other, men who had vanished in the car with him. Onlookers stated that there were five of them altogether and speedy confirmation was forthcoming in dramatic circumstances the same evening at Dieppe. About half-past nine that night in the rue Alexandre Dumas, close to the sea-front, one of the local inhabitants saw in the driving, misty rain five mysterious looking men wearing bowler hats surrounding an apparently derelict car which they appeared to be trying to repair. They disappeared shortly afterwards, and when the Dieppe police took charge of the car, they speedily discovered that it was identical with the one which had taken part in the dastardly attack on M. Caby.

More information was forthcoming, pointing even more strongly to the probability that the authorities were face to face with a gang of bandits determined to improve upon the methods of the out-of-date highwayman. The abandoned car proved to be identical with one which had been stolen from a gentleman living in Boulogne-sur-Seine. It had been taken on 13th December, together with the chauffeur's uniform, and although at the time it was thought to be nothing more than an ordinary, everyday theft which took place half a dozen times a week, there could be no doubt now that a band of daring robbers to whom murder was nothing were at large.

The Société Générale immediately offered a reward

of 12,500 francs (£500) for the apprehension of the criminals. All over France notices were posted giving a description of the wanted men, and were also sent to London, where it was thought an attempt might be made to negotiate the stolen shares. The clues poured in, and within forty-eight hours of the reward being offered officers of the Sûreté made a flying journey to Southampton where, they were informed, five suspicious-looking men had been seen with a motor-car. With the assistance of Scotland Yard they quickly ascertained that no member of the gang could possibly have crossed the Channel so soon, but shortly afterwards information came to the Sûreté that the stolen car had been garaged on the night of December 13th at the place of a man named Deitwiller, who lived at Bobigny. He was immediately subjected to a severe interrogation and told such a confused, lying story that he, his wife, and another woman named Botelli, who was living in his house, were at once placed under arrest.

The woman Botelli's husband, who also resided with the Deitwillers, could not be found. His wife said he was an itinerant dealer who travelled about the country buying and selling, but on investigating his identity he proved to have so many aliases that a warrant was at once issued against him. He frequently passed under the name of Leblanc, but in the records of the Sûreté he was known to be a Belgian named Edouard Carouy whom his fellow criminals called "Ginger".

For the better part of a fortnight while France was being combed north, east, south and west, no reliable news of the identity of the bandits could be obtained. But on January 3rd in the New Year

it became known that the leader of the gang was an ex-chauffeur named Jules Bonnot. People who had been present at the shooting of Caby identified Bonnot from a police photograph as the man who had driven the car in the rue Ordener. He had already been in the hands of the police, and the moment it became known that he was connected with the gang his description was circulated from one end of France to the other.

It seemed, however, that the bandits, fox-like, had gone to earth. For something like seven weeks, while the country was being scoured from one end to the other, not a trace of them could be found. Suddenly, on February 27th, they made a dramatic reappearance with results that were even more tragic.

Close about eight o'clock in the evening in the place du Havre, which is in front of the Gare Saint Lazare, the sound of pistol shots was heard. The crowd ran towards a man lying in the road, and when they reached the spot it was to see the extinct body of a gendarme whose life's blood mingled with the mud.

Half a dozen other police officers were on the scene in double quick time and commandeered a private car to pursue the murderers who had driven off down the rue du Havre, rue Tronchet and rue Royale, where, in the press of the traffic, they had been lost to sight. In the meantime other officers busied themselves finding out what had happened, and were told by people who had seen everything that it was undoubtedly the Bonnot motor bandits at large again.

It had all taken place in a flash. Garnier, a traffic officer, had stopped a car numbered 878X8 travelling on the left of the road instead of the right. He had called upon the driver to stop and had jumped on the

footboard, when one of the occupants fired three bullets into him, killing him on the spot. Eye-witnesses of the tragedy said there were three men on the front seat including the driver, and two more inside.

Five men ! There could be no question now that they were the same five who had been present at the shooting of M. Caby, as it also seemed certain that they were identical with the five who had abandoned the car at Dieppe. The car from which they had killed Garnier had been stolen that very morning at Saint Mandé, and within an hour of the murder its description, and that of the desperadoes inside it, was telegraphed to every police station in France. The next day the car was found burning at Saint-Ouen.

The whole country was now roused. In a short space of time information came into the possession of the Sûreté that enabled them to arrest a printer named De Boué (who was employed on the newspaper *L'Anarchie*) at the house of a man named Dieudonné in the rue Lecluse. Dieudonné himself, a man of the worst possible character who associated with the most dangerous gangs in Paris, was also taken into custody in company with his wife Louise, who was known amongst the anarchists as the Red Venus.

Correspondence discovered in Dieudonné's house told the police that other murders were afoot. A mysterious telegram from Alais in the Department of the Guard, which said, "Mother's health good", warned them that the bandits were planning another crime. No time was to be wasted ; it was not a case for scruple. De Boué, a little rat of a man in mortal terror of his life, confessed under pressure that Bonnot and his gang intended to kill the cashier of the Alais mines and rob him of the large sum of money that he

obtained from the bank every week to pay the workmen.

The authorities learnt other things even more important. There were far more men in the gang than they had ever suspected, but it was sufficient for their purpose just then to know that the principal of them were Bonnot, Garnier, Vallet, Callemin, alias Raymond La Science, Mounier, alias Simentoff, and Soudy. Precautions were immediately taken to protect the cashier, and the same night, carrying the telegram, a detective proceeded to Alais to discover the sender of it.

With the assistance of the Chief Constable of the town, he raided the dwelling of every suspicious character in the place, and in the house of a nam named Sazy, an employee of the P.L.M. railway who locally possessed the reputation of being an anarchist, came across a copybook containing songs in a handwriting precisely similar to that of the original telegram which said, "Mother's health good."

"Whose writing is this?" he demanded of Sazy.

"It is mine."

"You are a liar," said the officer. "I am going to put you under arrest and will charge you with murder unless you tell me who wrote it."

Sazy's courage did not last long and after a little further prevarication he blurted out that the songs had been written by his friend Mounier, who he said had been staying with him as his guest, no doubt for the purpose of planning the murder and robbery of the mines cashier. Mounier was somewhere in the neighbourhood of Alais, said the fear-stricken Sazy, but he professed not to know when he would return. The Chief Constable, with a pistol in his

hand, went off with Sazy to place him under lock and key, leaving the man from Paris, also armed, to await the coming of Mounier.

Sitting in that lonely cottage three miles in the country, with darkness fast coming down, awaiting the arrival of a bloodthirsty hunted man, was not an experience any man would readily go through again. Hidden behind the door with his pistol cocked, the detective sat in a chair listening intently for the slightest sound. But nothing happened. The hours sped by and Mounier did not come. In all likelihood he realized the danger, and with the arrival of the dawn the officer went into Alais and from there made his way back to Paris, there to receive more alarming news.

Caby, the bank messenger who had been shot in the rue Ordener, had so far recovered from his wounds that he was confronted with Dieudonné and recognized him as the man who had attempted to kill him. Other men were then captured, two of whom, Rodriguez and Belloni, gave a great deal of valuable information about Bonnot and Garnier. These two, they said, were armed with automatic pistols and would not be taken alive.

A few days later Guichard, the Chief of the Paris Detective Department, received an amazing letter signed "Garnier" with a fingerprint upon it. The writer began by declaring that Eugene Dieudonné had taken no active part in the attack upon Caby and the shooting of the police officer Garnier, and went on to say that he took all the responsibility of both crimes.

"I am not armed sufficiently to struggle eternally against the police," he concluded, "but I tell you

plainly that I will sell my life dearly. A word to the wise is sufficient. "

Garnier, if it was really he, knew, of course, that Dieudonné would be charged with murder, but for the time being the authorities had no intention of dealing with him. It was infinitely more important that the whole gang were rounded up. People were becoming afraid to venture out of doors. Another murder had nearly taken place at Pontoise where the bandits got into the house of a notary named Tintaut, shot at him when he courageously attacked them, and inflicted severe wounds upon him.

Then came another sensation. Early in the morning of March 25th, Bonnot, Garnier, Vallet, Callemin, Mounier and Soudy drove out to a lonely road near Montgeron, and at the point of a pistol stopped a new 40 h.p. car belonging to the Marquis de Rouget. There were two men in the car, the chauffeur, and an engineer belonging to the famous firm of De Dion Bouton, who was driving the car. The driver, Mathillet, stopped when he was signalled, but rather foolishly attempted to escape and was shot dead by Bonnot. The chauffeur scuttled over the side and got away amidst a hail of bullets. This was at 8.15 a.m. Precisely two hours later the car stopped in front of the local branch of the Société Générale at Chantilly. The six bandits who had taken part in the murder of two hours before were in it.

With a coolness which betokened a settled plan Callemin, Mounier, and Soudy walked inside the office of the bank. Bonnot, no doubt alert for the faintest warning of danger, remained at the wheel of the car, while Garnier and Vallet were in the back. There was no hesitation about the men who had gone inside.

With cold-blooded cruelty they pulled out their pistols and riddled with bullets the cashier and two clerks who were inside. Like a flash, Callemin then ran behind the counter, filled his pockets with all the money he could find, and ran out of the bank with the two other men.

Other employees of the bank armed with pistols had come on the scene as the three murderers were clambering into their car. As they were starting off a fierce exchange of shots took place in which several people were wounded, but as far as could be seen not one of the six received as much as a scratch.

The news of this further outrage stirred the entire population of France to savage anger. Imperative orders from the Prime Minister to apprehend the murderers at all cost were received at police headquarters. With thousands of officers feverishly engaged in hunting down the assassins it was not long before the crisis drew near. On March 30th Soudy was arrested at Berck-sur-Mer, while on April 3rd Carouy was captured at Choisy-le-Roi and tried to commit suicide while in the cells.

Other members of the gang were brought in. On April 7th Callemin was found at rue de la Tour d'Auvergne, having in his possession 5,000 francs, part of the money stolen from the bank at Chantilly. On April 20th, Jouin, Deputy Chief of the Paris Detective Department, discovered Mounier in hiding at Belleville, and after a desperate struggle succeeded in apprehending him.

It might have been thought, following the shocking tragedies that had taken place in the last few weeks, that the bandits had now reached the limit of their bloodthirstiness. But apparently Garnier had told

the truth in the letter he wrote to M. Guichard when he said that he would sell his life dearly. Seemingly, also, his confederates were equally desperate.

Immediately after Mounier had been arrested, M. Jouin, accompanied by four of his inspectors, Colmar, Robert, Sevestre and Rohr, were notified that a tradesman named Cardy living at Alfortville was suspected of having received some of the shares stolen from M. Caby in the rue Ordener. Jouin at once set off to raid the place, but on arriving there found that Cardy was not at home. A servant informed Jouin that his master was paying a visit to a fellow shopkeeper named Gauzy, who lived in a two-storied place not far away.

Courageously, probably not expecting armed resistance, Jouin went into Gauzy's shop and point blank told him that he was going to search the premises from top to bottom. Leaving two of his men, Sevestre and Rohr, on the ground floor to see that Cardy did not escape, Jouin, accompanied by Colmar and Robert, went upstairs following Gauzy. When they reached the top of the stairs, Gauzy opened a door with his key and invited Jouin to walk in.

There was someone in the room. As Jouin came in, he heard a man moving. It was dark and before he really knew what was happening the hidden man, a pistol in his hand, had savagely leapt at him. A fierce struggle took place and Colmar, who had rushed in to his Chief's assistance, caught a glimpse of the weapon.

In the dim light it was utterly impossible to see who was who. But from the vile maledictions that Jouin's opponent shouted out in the gloom there could be no doubt that he was an apache of the most

dangerous type. Up and down the room the two men swayed in a death grip, while Colmar desperately attempted to pull down the arm that held the pistol He was a tremendously strong fellow, this bandit, too strong for Jouin. Freeing himself from the detective's grip for a second or two, he fired at him half a dozen times, bursts of flame lighting up the darkness of the room with eerie flashes.

Poor Jouin was killed on the spot and Colmar, who had called to his colleague Robert for help, fell down severely wounded. Before the detective downstairs could do anything, the murderer had jumped through a window, made his way over a wall, and escaped.

It was Bonnot. Cardy confessed to his identity, and was escorted under arrest to the local police station while Colmar was being removed to the hospital. The body of the unfortunate Jouin had to remain in the room to allow of the crime being reconstructed. In the meantime, there was held in Paris on instructions of the Prime Minister a general conference of all the high police officials to decide upon a course of action to exterminate the entire bandit gang. The principal people present at this conference were :

MM. Hamard, Director of Investigations, Metropolitan Police, Guichard, Chief of Paris Detective Dept.; Sebille, General Controller of investigations, Gilbert, Judge of Instruction, leading the Investigations of the case; Faivre, Divisional Commissioner of the Mobile Brigade.

As a result of the deliberations that took place, it was decided that the probable or possible hiding-places of any of the bandits should be raided by armed officers. It will appear almost incredible that the previous

raids which had taken place were conducted by unarmed men. Just think of it! To be called upon at a moment's notice to fight a wild beast without a weapon! But there it was. The French police had always been forbidden to carry arms of any sort and yet, here, confronted with bloodthirsty banditti utterly indifferent whether they were killed or not, they were asked to arrest them unarmed! It was quite bad enough to tackle such men with a pistol to help them, considering that they were in hiding and would have every opportunity of shooting at their enemies without warning.

Where was Bonnot? That was the question. Little by little, as pressure was applied to them, the members of his gang began to "squeak". Be sure that no kind words were thrown away on them. The blood of half a dozen people was crying out for vengeance, and until Bonnot and his other leaders had been taken alive or dead the battle would continue.

It came at last! On the evening of April 28th Guichard, after interrogating one of the prisoners, received information of the probable hiding-place of Bonnot, and at daybreak the following morning, accompanied by three or four of his inspectors heavily armed, he drove out to a small house at Choisy-le-Roi, near Paris on which there was to be seen the sign: "GARAGE REPAIRS". This time, having a very fair idea that inside the house there was hidden the man who knew that his blood was being shrieked for by the entire French nation, the officers of the law carefully reconnoitred the position before they made a move.

Guichard, accompanied by Inspectors Augene and Harlov, pistols in their hands, suddenly walked into

the garage alongside the house. There was a man working on a motor-cycle, a rough-looking customer who was evidently the proprietor of the place. Dubois was his name, and the moment he saw the three policemen he jumped up in astonishment and shouted out, as though he was talking to the boy at the other end of the garage :

"Be off, for God's sake, be off."

But he cried out in such a loud voice that it was quite evident he was giving warning to somebody close by. The three officers hastily closed upon him to prevent any further action, but before they could touch him he had pulled out a pistol of his own and shot Harlov. The battle proper had begun.

THE MOTOR BANDITS OF PARIS

PART II

IT may seem almost unbelievable that one man should take upon himself the terrible task of captaining a gang of desperadoes who were bound to be exterminated sooner or later. Bonnot knew perfectly well, of course, once he fell into the grip of the police, that he would end his life on the guillotine. One could well understand, therefore, the oath he had sworn not to be taken alive.

But the amazing part of this bizarre chapter in the annals of the underworld was that he had imbued most of his associates with the same reckless resolve. Most of them, apparently, were also determined to sell their lives dearly. Kill, or be killed—that was their battle-cry.

Harlov, badly wounded, fell down with a bullet in his body from the shot Dubois fired at him, but courageously pulled out his own weapon and returned the compliment without, however, hitting his man. Then, from an upstairs window, came further firing, evidently from Bonnot. Augene was wounded and Guichard, realizing that he was in serious plight, stood at bay in the garage wondering what was going to happen to him. Dubois had already made his escape, and for some little time nothing further happened. Augene was dragged out of the garage by his Chief who, summoning his other officers, had the wounded men taken to hospital, while reinforcements from Paris were at once telephoned for.

Inside the house were the two bandits, hidden from view, but occasionally venturing to a window to fire at any policeman who hove into view. There were sufficient officers on the spot to kill them if they attempted to make a run for it, but they probably realized that their time had come at last, and that it only remained for them to fight to the death.

The siege of the house began. The Mayor of Choisy-le-Roi, M. Rendu, his deputy, M. Logerot, a couple of dozen of the inhabitants armed with rifles, and a detachment of gendarmerie all provided with weapons, encircled the house some distance away awaiting the arrival of the force from Paris. Bonnot was like a will o' the wisp. From here, there and everywhere he poured fusillades of shots upon the attackers, his revolvers cracking away like machine-guns. He fired from one of the windows on the first floor, then from the door leading to a small outer staircase, and then popped up at another window to fire another volley at his enemies guarding the back. Two more inspectors were seriously wounded.

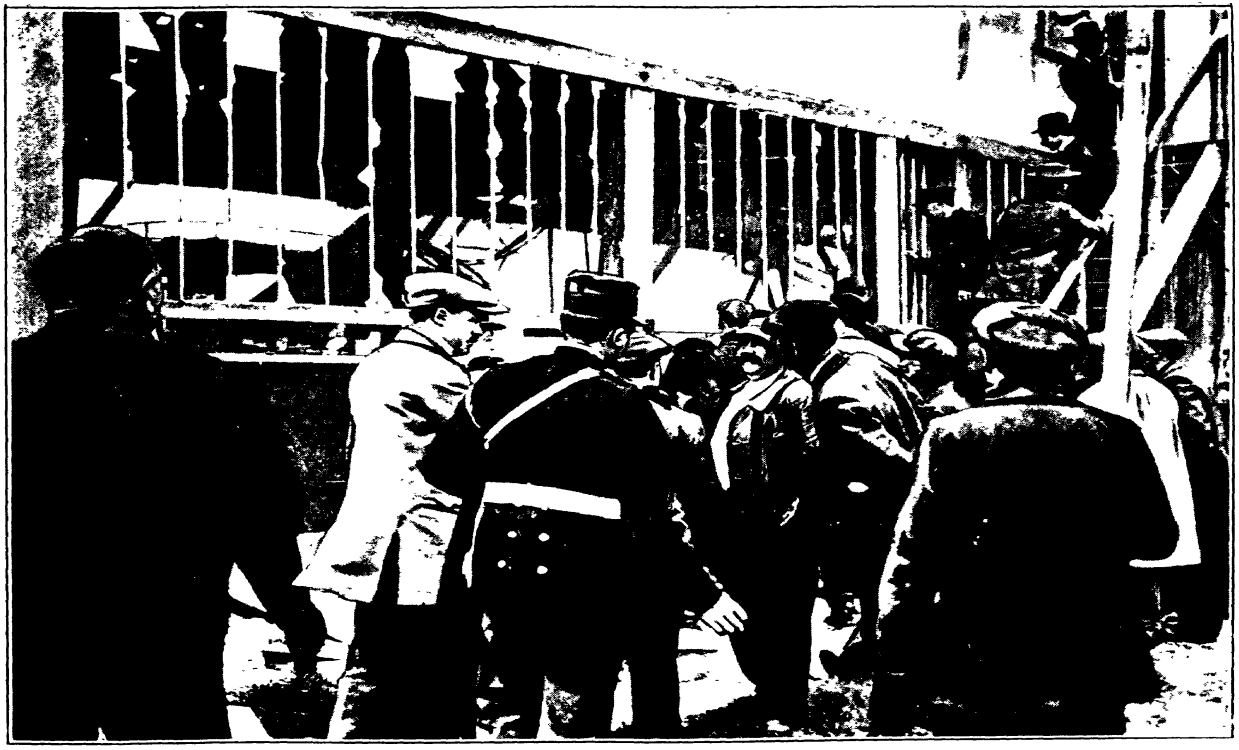
The bullets of the besieging party smashed every piece of glass in the place, but still Bonnot and Dubois carried on the fight. At 9.30 a.m. two companies of the Republican Guard under Captain Riondet and Lieut. Fontan arrived on the scene, as well as a body of firemen with ladders ready to scale the sides of the house. At the same time the famous M. Lepine, the Prefect of the Paris police, M. Hamard, and a number of other high officials, drove up in motor-cars. A car containing four inspectors from the Sûreté came to watch the battle on behalf of the Ministry of the Interior and to report to General Headquarters

the necessity for further reinforcements. At the time they arrived there were six or seven hundred men surrounding the house. Whatever happened, Bonnot was to be taken, alive or dead.

A conference was held and it was resolved to try and blow up the house. One of the peasants living in the neighbourhood bravely volunteered to drive a cart containing a load of hay right up to the front door, concealed behind its shelter being Fontan with dynamite cartridges. The peasant stipulated, however, that he should have something with which he could defend himself and, moved to admiration by his courage, one of the detectives lent him a Smith & Wesson pistol. With his reins in one hand and the pistol in the other he drove up to the house, to be greeted by a fierce volley of shots.

Fontan, equally brave, hid himself under the hay and jumped out opposite the door. He pulled out one of his cartridges with the fuse already attached, lit it, and scrambled into the cart again, which hastily drove off round the corner to safety. With a colossal bang the dynamite exploded, but the door did not give way. Nothing daunted, Fontan ordered the peasant to drive back again. A second time he failed, but still he persisted. A third cartridge placed right under the door amidst a hail of shots from upstairs blew it right open and Fontan, pistol in hand, followed by a mass of men watching the operation, rushed in.

One, at least, of the bandits was dead. In a ground-floor room was the body of Dubois with a bullet wound between the eyes. The house was now filled with soldiers and police. A rush was made to the first floor to get Bonnot. He was in a bedroom, protected



by a mattress, with a pistol in his right hand, his countenance the picture of savage despair. He had evidently been badly wounded, for the blood was pouring from his face. One more shot he fired, and one only. The men who crowded in upon him gave him a point blank volley and riddled him with bullets. He fell face downwards on the mattress, and was then taken, a gory spectacle, to a taxi-cab with instructions that he should be rushed off to hospital before he died. But, breathing defiance to the last, he collapsed on the way and was dead before he reached Paris.

That, at all events, ended the first stage of the battle. The leader of the gang was dead and it now remained to wipe out the remainder.

On May 8th, important information was received at headquarters concerning the whereabouts of Garnier and Vallet. The news was very explicit. It was said that they had hidden themselves at Nogent-sur-Marne, close to the river and the railway viaduct, where they had secured a comfortable little villa with a garden in which they spent most of their time. They had women with them ; Garnier a mistress named Marie Schoofs, while Vallet had a woman known as Dondon. It was a strange life they were leading. The women had been compelled to join their lovers, and were only allowed to go out to do some shopping. Garnier had cut his black hair short and let his moustache grow, while Vallet, in the vain hope that he might still escape Nemesis, had bleached his black hair with peroxide of hydrogen ! The two men worked in the garden and, between times, indulged in physical exercises, no doubt with the thought that they must keep themselves fit for the fight that lay before them. They were said to have

plenty of weapons and ammunition, and were determined, if the worst came to the worst, to exact a heavy price for their capture.

Once more an army left Paris. At 5 p.m. that night hostilities began. Garnier, Vallet, and Marie Schoofs were in the garden at the back when M. Guichard, followed by a dozen men, banged on the front door and shouted out in a loud voice: "Open in the name of the law. I am the Commissioner of Police."

He received no reply. The two hurriedly left the garden and rushed upstairs into a room which it would have been impossible to attack without heavy loss of life. The door was knocked down and in one of the rooms the woman Schoofs was found alone.

"Come out at once," Guichard cried out to her. "Nothing will happen to you if you obey my orders."

At the same time he again called upon Vallet and Garnier to surrender. Another woman rushed out of the house from the kitchen at the back. It was Dondon, the mistress of Vallet, and the two women, badly stricken with panic, hurriedly ran out into the open, there to receive a volley of shots from the men hidden upstairs.

"You cows!" they shrieked. "You have sold us."

Bullets were whining and whizzing everywhere. A sergeant named Fleury received two shots in the chest and one in the arm, while Inspector Cagrousse got one in the leg.

What was to be done? It was no use wasting men's lives unnecessarily, and Guichard was strongly advised to adopt some settled plan of action before he attempted

to take the house. The attacking force was temporarily drawn off to await the arrival of Lépine and Hamard, while soldiers and police were stationed at every possible avenue of escape to kill the bandits if a chance presented itself. From inside the house came constant shooting. Pistols over the top of the window-ledges would be seen, and a bullet would go by with a vicious whine which made the attacking forces hurriedly seek cover. Ultimately there arrived upon the scene the 1st Regiment of Zouaves, a company of the Republican Guard, a detachment of gendarmes, and half the police officials of Paris. At a respectful distance the villa was surrounded and instructions were then issued for volley firing into every window and door. A body of men were stationed on the viaduct to try and break in the roof of the house with heavy stones.

The crack of the bullets and the crash of the stones went on for an hour and a half. Not a sign of the bandits could be seen and at 6.30 p.m. a bugle blew to cease fire. Guichard, with a courage worthy of the highest admiration, calmly walked towards the house and shouted out :

"Garnier, Vallet, in the name of the law I command you to surrender."

No reply came. But the bandits were still alive and fighting as desperately as ever. Two windows suddenly opened and from them came shots which made Guichard wisely beat a hasty retreat. He came running back to Lépine, who ordered the bugle to be sounded again for the resumption of hostilities. Bombs had arrived from Paris and were distributed to the troops on the viaduct. They were thrown upon the roof to burst with an ear-splitting crash, but without

doing any serious damage. Garnier came out into the garden, bawled out defiant remarks, and fired a few shots at some of the men on the viaduct, wounding one of the officers. But he, too, was hit before he got back into shelter.

Four bombs had burst upon the house and everything had become silent. It was thought that the two desperadoes were dead, and six police inspectors, protected with shields, advanced towards the front door to see what had happened. They had no sooner come into range when another fusillade greeted them. Two of the policemen were wounded, while the Prefect, M. Lépine, had the rim of his cap shot away by a bullet. The men inside were obviously very much alive. From a window they could be heard calling the besiegers pigs of murderers and various other choice epithets which will not bear repetition here.

Once more there was a lull on the battlefield. Another hasty conference was held at which Lépine emphatically declined to run the risk of losing any more lives. Instead, he telephoned to Paris to send out forthwith a detachment of firemen with searchlights accompanied by some police dogs.

Time was getting on and it became imperative that the enemy was annihilated. It was getting close on midnight when the firemen arrived and hastily got their searchlights into position. From all sides the house was blinded with light to dazzle the two bandits, while under cover of the glare men with cartridges of dynamite and melinite crept along the ground to blow in the walls. Squadrons of machine-gunners with their weapons trained upon the house were waiting to pour in a volley the moment either man showed himself.

It was a weird, terrible scene. The searchlights showed up every nook and crevice of the badly battered villa, though not a sign of the two men could be seen. They were obviously at their last gasp, even if they were not already dead. A tremendous explosion took place and the front of the house fell in. Immediately the machine guns burst into action; it was for all the world like some of the battles that afterwards took place on the Western Front.

The bugles blew the "cease fire", followed by a sharp order to rush the house. Not a sound was to be heard. The big, savage police dogs were sent inside, but not a shot greeted them. Smoke poured out of the doors and the smell of blood was everywhere. A body of men ran pell-mell upstairs to find the place simply reeking with it, But the battle was over. Behind a mattress in one of the bedrooms was Garnier, stone dead, with more than a dozen bullet wounds in him. Vallet was in a corner lying on his face also dead, the pair of them looking as though they had come from a shambles. In the glare of the searchlights they were taken outside and laid on the ground. Never in their lives had the police seen such a sight; it made them almost sick to look upon the savage faces with the blood still pouring out of their innumerable wounds.

The two women had already been escorted to a place of safety, and when Lépine and Guichard had finally satisfied themselves that no more of the gang were in hiding, the troops were drawn off in the early hours of the morning and silence reigned supreme in the house of death. Thousands of morbid sightseers crowded to the scene, but were kept back by a cordon

of police, while the army returned to Paris with the bodies of Garnier and Vallet.

Many months elapsed before it was possible to bring the remaining culprits in this astounding phase of modern criminality to justice. It was not until February, 1913, that there appeared at Seine Assizes the following men, all of them members of Bonnot's gang :

Dieudonné	Sentenced to death, but reprieved.
Callemin	Sentenced to death.
Mounier	,, ,, ,,
Soudy	,, ,, ,,
Carouy and Medge	Penal servitude for life.
Gauzy	18 months' imprisonment.
De Boué	10 years' penal servitude and 10 years' banishment from large towns.
Poyer	Five years' ditto.
Deitwiller	Four years' imprisonment.
Belloni	,, ,, ,,
Kilbatchiche	Five years' imprisonment and five years' banishment.
Jourdan	18 months' imprisonment.
Benard	Six years' imprisonment and five years' banishment.
Crozat de Fleury	Five years' seclusion.
Reniert	One year's seclusion.

Carouy, who had twice attempted to take his own life, succeeded in committing suicide the day after sentence was passed upon him. Perhaps he was the better off ; any man who has choice of death or the remainder of his existence to be spent amongst the

pestilential horrors of Cayenne would certainly choose the former.

On April 21st, 1913, on a bitterly cold morning, Callemin, Soudy, and Mounier were brought out for public execution. The strenuous efforts which had been made to save them from death had been uncompromisingly refused by the President of the Republic on the grounds that even if they had not definitely killed any of the unfortunate officers who had attempted to capture them, they had undoubtedly actively participated in all Bonnot's operations.

So, in an icy rain that chilled one to the marrow, the three men were led out one by one to be decapitated by the guillotine, as is the law in France. Grim old Monsieur de Paris, otherwise M. Deibler, the official executioner, carried out his job with expeditious efficiency. Soudy, who had the privilege of going first, cried out to the assembled multitude as his head was placed in the lunette: "It is cold. Good-bye all."

The next on the list was Callemin, who evidently possessed some slight scruples about the decency of the proceedings, for he shouted out to the people whether they thought it nice to witness a man's agony. He was going on to make a few more remarks about the impropriety of sightseeing on such an occasion, when Deibler's assistants unceremoniously pushed his head into the lunette and had it off before he could make any more complaints.

It was Mounier, no doubt, who had the greater cause to feel aggrieved, for upon him was the ordeal of seeing his fellow bandits beheaded, which cannot be a pleasant sight for any man when he knows that his turn is to come shortly. To judge by what he had to

say to M. Deibler, he felt quite strongly about the matter, and he was still talking about it when the knife came down upon his neck and sharply cut short his impatience with officialdom and its inconsiderate ways generally.

THE END

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